

ALTARS TO MAMMON



ELIZABETH NEFF

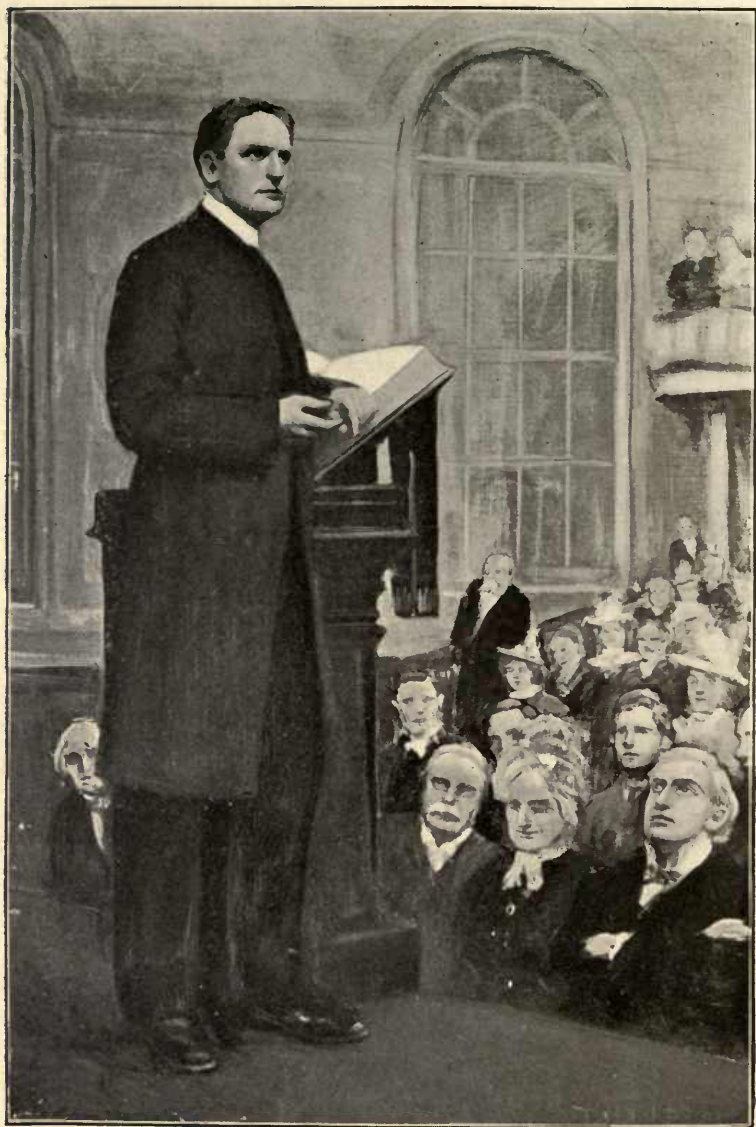
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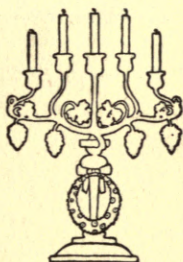


"MUST I BLOW A TIN HORN TO LEAD MEN TO GOD?"—Page 87.

ALTARS
TO
MAMMON

BY
ELIZABETH NEFF

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY
F. DANA MARSH



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To
AMY CLARE NEFF

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CHAPTER I

"CAN'T help it, sir; there's no train for Mogadonier before 'leven ten," declared the ticket agent, but the tall passenger frowned at him unconvinced, as is the way of passengers.

"But the agent at Baltimore——"

"Yes, I know he did; but they don't keep run of our trains back East. He ought to told you that the limited don't stop at Mogadonier. It's due here in fifteen minutes, but it won't do you no good. You'll have to wait for the accommodation."

"And the accommodation is due——?"

"At 'leven ten."

"Two hours and forty minutes!" exclaimed the tall passenger accusingly, with a glance at the clock.

"Can't help it, sir," returned the man of trains, a patient smile on his round, fair, perspiring face. "When you get to Mogadonier you'll wish it had been longer—that is—— Ever been there?"

"No."

"Thought I'd never seen you before. Goin' to stop there long?"

"Yes, I'm going there to live."

"Great Cæsar's ghost! You!"

The look and tone were so incredulous that North-

more stopped as he was turning away and asked, "What's the matter with Mogadonia?"

"Great Cæsar! What ain't the matter with it? It's the meanest, cussedest, deadeast town between—Chicago and Baltimore. That's what's the matter with it. I was stationed there for a year myself, and I was ready for the graveyard when I got out. I heard there was to be a new drug store started there; perhaps you're in that line?"

Northmore gave a short laugh. "No, I'm not in that line. I'm in—the—clerical line. I'm going there to an appointment."

"Oh, yes; sure; in Mr. Martin's place. He went through here the first of the week. I tell you he was glad to get away. Well, you're a mighty different sort from Mr. Martin—but I rather think that'll make the town worse yet for you. It was about his level, you know; and you—— Gracious! Well, I s'pose you have to take what comes. Goin' out to see the sights?"

"I want to get out into the air. What is there to see?" He stepped to the door and looked down the irregular old street, slumbering in the hot silence of the September morning. The rows of thin-leaved locust trees cast but skeleton shadows on the board walks. The friendly station agent had followed him, loath to be left alone.

"There's not much," he confessed, "but there's more in Bellevue than you'll find in Mogadonier. There's the glass works—some folks go to see them—and you'd be interested in the new church, bein' a preacher.

They're buildin' one of the finest churches here that you'll find in this part of the country—'way ahead of this town. Go straight out this street and turn to the left at the third corner—— Why, what's happened?" he broke off.

A slow cavalcade turned the third corner as he pointed to it, a team of men carrying something prone, which the two watched while it approached the station. A man in workmen's clothes, his head wound with a bandage, was stretched upon the cot borne by his companions, for their overalls were white with stone dust and mortar-splashed like his own. The bearers set down their burden on the dusty grass under a tree near the barren station and stood looking at it, hesitating what to do next. The station agent stepped over at once, followed by the minister.

"What's the matter? Why, it's Quiggins! What done it?"

"Accident to the derrick—stone slipped again and just missed smashing him to pulp," replied one of the two stonecutters who spoke English.

"I hope's it's not a bad hurt, Quiggins," and the agent bent sympathetically over the sufferer.

The man turned his face, deathly pale under the black stubble of beard, and spoke in a shaken voice. "I guess not—only a cut across my head and a broken leg or two—'nough to lay me up till the job's finished and it's too cold to get another. The doctor fixed me up as good as he could to go home. Might just as well have been worse—this time o' year."

"You'd like a glass of water, I think," suggested Northmore, noting the dry lips.

"I would that—the best kind," and turning to the bearers, "you fellows go on back to work. I'll lay right here till the train comes, and you'll be docked if you stay away any longer. Go on—don't lose any more time—and thank you."

"What train do you take?" asked Northmore, returning with a glass of cold water from the adjoining house.

"'Leven ten, to Mogadonia."

"Then I shall be glad to stay and look after him. You can leave him to me; I'm waiting for that train myself."

The man who had lingered glanced at him gratefully. "All right, sir. Thank you. Well, good-bye, Quig. Don't lose your grip, and we'll be down Sunday to see how you're gettin' on. The gentleman'll stay by you till train time."

Northmore brought a chair from the waiting room, found a fan, and willingly took his place as nurse for the next two hours and a half.

"I wonder if I can't get you something for a pillow—wait, yes, I've got a college pillow in my trunk on the platform there." It took but a moment to get it, and the man looked up gratefully.

"That's better," he said weakly. "I had so many hurts I forgot I had a head."

"You have had a narrow escape. I hope that you'll find you're not so bad as you feel now; you seem to be

recovering a little from the shock. You looked so white at first that I was afraid you were—you would faint." Northmore's tone was reassuring.

"I've lost my job all right. It was a mighty close call—and I don't know yet how bad it may be. It's a damned shame, too. I'm the fifth man killed on that church. Next thing that rotten old boiler 'll bust and a few more poor fellows 'll go the same road."

"You ought to notify the contractor that it is unsafe to work there."

The man's eyes, bright with pain, turned contemptuously upon his companion. "You ain't a workin' man, and you think like all the rest that all we've got to do is to send in our orders for improvements and they're brought to us on a silver plate."

"But he certainly can't ask you to risk your lives in your daily work—and I suppose most of you have others depending upon you."

"That's just it. He knows we've got others to feed—with good big mouths—and he don't ask us anything about it; he makes us risk our lives every hour we're there because he knows we've got to have the work, and because we know there's plenty to take our places the minute we kick."

Quiggins' eyes glowed resentfully; he went on with a defiant tone: "Now, I was laid off nearly all summer, and had some bad luck in my family, and got this job only last week because the man who's doing this work thought he'd be caught by winter and took on a few more men. I jumped at the chance, though I knew it

wouldn't last long—and here, within seven days, I'm done for! I tell you, if that stone hadn't glanced I'd 'a' been carried home in a bucket like the last poor fellow was. We all went to his funeral, and the preacher said it was a dispensation of Providence! Now, what you s'pose the Lord Almighty let's men that's workin' on a sixty-thousand-dollar church to His glory get smashed to pulp for? Can't He get 'em fast 'nough other ways—or ain't He suited with their churches? Yes, sir, that white necktie dude come down to that fellow's house and made a prayer over what they had picked up of him—with his wife and five little children in front of the coffin—and said it was a mysterious '*dispensation of Providence!*' Now, wouldn't that jar you?"

"What would you call it?" There was a slight catch in Northmore's breath as he leaned nearer. He was that day to take his first appointment, and this seemed to offer a golden opportunity for a bit of missionary work. He waited his time with the fervor and confidence of the novice.

Quiggins scowled deeply at the question, irritated by his loss scarcely less than by the pain he seemed to bear with fortitude: "I would call it pure gall in that fellow to tell the Lord's intentions—and lie about 'em. It was the contractor's meanness—that's what it was. And that fellow that never did a day's work in his life is helpin' to wring the half of that sixty-thousand-dollar church out of this poor little Bellevue for the glory of himself and the glory of the rich man that's givin' the

other half, and who's the wickedest man this side of the river. Then he'll prink himself in that pulpit and preach what nobody believes."

Northmore fairly gasped his slow answer: "You don't realise what you are saying!"

No such heresy had been considered within his Seminary walls. "If the people who build this church are poor and have made sacrifices to do it, it will be dearer and more sacred to them."

"Don't you fool yourself! The church business is a played-out fraud, and they know it in Bellevue better than most places. They have reason to. They ain't doin' this of their own free will; they're doin' it under the yoke of Tom Morgan, the meanest man unhung; he's crushin' thirty thousand dollars out of that little congregation to match thirty thousand that he don't know what to do with. Then he'll have the credit of it all, here and hereafter—but it'll be too fine for the rest of the town. It's a heap easier way to get to Heaven than the old Bible way. He calls it rearin' an altar; it's hush money to the Lord, that's what it is—and it's a rich man's snap; workin' men have no use for the church any more."

"Can you tell me why they don't?—unless you are talking too much."

"No, it does me good—helps to forget the pain. Why, my sort of men don't go to church because there ain't no church for 'em. They ain't wanted in a rich man's church, that's mighty sure, and they won't go to the 'tramps' Paradise' in the free missions. I see

myself settin' on velvet cushions in Tom Morgan's pew listenin' to that white-necktie dude preach honey and wine to him—though it's a livin' lie."

"What does he preach that is false?" Northmore's controlled tone was very low.

"Oh, the whole thing. His doctrines is all right. I ain't findin' fault with *religion*—but his members don't work at it week days. Like this——" he was answering the fire of Northmore's eyes; "the Bible says, 'Love your neighbour like you do yourself,' and—they love him better—if he's got money! The Bible says, 'Thou shalt not steal anything,' and they don't—unless they get their hands onto it. The Bible says, 'Thou shalt not murder,' and your good deacon never does—on a moonlight night."

"A general assault is no argument," there was relief in Northmore's drawn face. "The Church has been assaulted in all ways in all ages, but it stands triumphant—unharméd."

Quiggins was so eager to reply that he tried to raise himself on one arm, forgetting his injuries. "But I tell you it's goin' to take a tumble pretty soon. The world is gettin' onto some things—and the church don't stand for what it did even when I was a boy. Why, the worst thing you can say about a business man is that he's a roarin' church member—then watch him close in a horse trade! Take Mogadonia, where I live. There's three churches, besides the Catholic and a few little denominations that don't count. Every one of them three leading churches is full of honest, decent men, and

yet each of the three has one mean man that queers the whole lot. Now, a church is like a chain, no stronger than its weakest link, no better than its meanest member. That's a fact every time; it's judged from the meanest man in it. People say, 'Look at Joe Fury. He's a Presbyterian, and *I* wouldn't stoop to do what *de* does.' And Tom Morgan—the king of rascals."

"What has he done?"

"It would be a lot easier to tell you what he hasn't done. I'll tell you one thing, though, and see what you say to it! Tom Morgan made his start in a little factory down the creek, and he'd have made his finish there, too, if it hadn't been for a man that worked for him, a fellow by the name of Ellis, as much smarter man than Morgan as one man can be than another. This Ellis, he invented a machine that was a miracle in its way; he'd worked on it every spare minute for fifteen years, and spent every cent he could skimp on it, and at last *he got it!* But when it was perfect he couldn't patent it. This big government charges a tax on ideas, and he couldn't raise the sixty dollars he needed to get it through. He had a sickly wife, too, and whenever he'd get a little saved up out of his small wages she'd take worse and it would have to go. After a long wait he got discouraged and saw he'd have to raise it on a loan—but nobody would lend it on a model. At last he took it to Morgan, and *he* saw at a glance that it was the biggest thing out and he refused to lend a dollar on it—for another man's benefit. He offered to buy the thing for two hundred and fifty dollars and patent it himself, and

that was all he would do. Ellis begged him to take a half interest—or sixty per cent. But Morgan is pure hog, and he knew he could get the whole thing. Ellis held out against him and his family turned in to help him. His wife took in washing and his little girl stopped school and hired out to work, and at last they got it together—the very day that Ellis's wife came down with an awful sickness. The money was all gone in no time, and then Mrs. Ellis had to be taken to Pittsburgh for an operation and Ellis had to raise a hundred dollars quick; it was a case of life and death. He went to Morgan and begged him to take a four-fifths interest for a hundred dollars. *Did he do it?* No, sir-ee! Tom Morgan is as hard as rock and he would have the whole hog or none. *Did Ellis sell?* By God, he had to. He signed away his rights, carried over his little machine and delivered it, put the money in his pocket and come home. It was in the night. He stopped on the way and ordered a carriage to take his wife to the midnight train—then he come home. I was settin' in his porch. He'd sold out his life an' he knew it. He dropped on the bit of yard inside the fence like he'd been knocked down, and rolled over quiet and tore up the grass by the roots." Quiggins paused to get the choke out of his voice at the memory.

"Did Mrs. Ellis live?" Northmore was breathlessly interested.

"Oh, yes, in a way. She never walked again, and Ellis crippled his hand after a while and lost his job. Morgan was glad of an excuse to get him out of sight,

and turned him out to starve. Now would you say the Lord would prosper a man like that?"

"Never!"

"You bet He oughtn't to! And if you was a preacher, would you butter the track to Heaven for him? You'd say that money ought to carry a curse, wouldn't you? But he wasn't cursed—not him! He's made money out of that patent till he can't count it. He built a palace round at the foot of Blue Mountain that looks like a courthouse. He has summer homes on the ocean and winter homes in the South and boats and automobiles. His wife dresses like the Queen of Sheba and rides in a yellow band waggon with two monkeys in uniform on behind blowin' a horn, and his sons is off to some big college with nigger men to dress them. And he is slick—slick and pious! Lord! Butter won't melt in his mouth. He's high mucky-muck in the church; goes with his Bible under his arm, and makes speeches to the Sunday School on 'How to Lead the Life Beautiful,' and 'The Golden Rule in Everyday Life.' That was to the Men's Club last Sunday afternoon. But all the same there's a girl's grave off in the swampy corner of the graveyard that he filled just as sure as if he'd shot her—and not half so merciful, either! And in a cold little shanty over on the spur at Mogadonia there's two livin' wrecks slowly dyin' of broken hearts and starvation; that's Ellis and his wife. Now, what do you s'pose Tom Morgan does for them out of all the millions he's rolled up on their patent? Not a thing! Not one blamed cent?"

“Then he cannot know of their need.”

“Don’t you fool yourself—though you wouldn’t think a man could be so hard clear to the grave. But, I say, if Divine law ain’t to make men better than human law, what is it good for? I’m a poor man and I never had a dollar yet that I didn’t get hard and honest, but I wouldn’t be caught sneakin’ through the gates of Heaven ’long side of such a towerin’ rascal as Tom Morgan. No, sir! I’ll walk into Hell with my head up—and I notice some awful good company goin’ that way, too. Now, the best man in my town don’t belong to no church, and I know one reason is that he won’t herd with such frauds as Joe Fury and ’Lije Sims and Tom Morgan—that’s Proctor Garnett—— Know him? Well, he’s the squarest man I ever worked for, and he don’t blow his religion on a trumpet; he don’t have to. He lives it. His work is his profession and his pay roll is his creed, and they’re louder’n trumpets. I’ll bet on his chances, but the preacher that’ll stand up in front of Tom Morgan and take pay for his salvation is a liar—and everybody knows it. If he don’t take that chance to say, ‘Tom Morgan, you’re a damned thief and murderer!’ he’ll never pass out free grace to a workin’ man in this county—though likely we’re not the men he cares to save anyway. I wouldn’t touch a preacher like that with a poker—and that’s why workin’ men don’t go to church. We see the rough side of religion. And where are we wanted, anyhow? If you’re rich, you can live any way you please, and buy salvation. If you’re a dead beat, you can have it

for charity; but if you're just a common man that works hard for every cent you get, you can go to Eternal Smoke!"

Quiggins stopped, panting, and Northmore gave him a drink with a trembling hand. The man had worked himself into a white heat; great drops stood on his forehead, but for once he had spoken. He looked searchingly at Northmore for an answer, and saw that his face was livid. "Of course," he added quickly, "you ain't a workin' man, and you see the hand-polished side of it; likely you belong yourself, and I ain't sayin' one word against the bulk of good people that does belong. I only blame them for bowin' down to the big robbers."

"What ought they to do?"

"Oh, that's their lookout."

"Suppose you were a preacher?"

"Me a preacher?" He gave a scornful little laugh. "Me a preacher! Oh, Lord, I'd ruther work for a livin'. I'd have to. I'd never take a dollar of blood money from any man unless I earned it. Suppose you was a preacher yourself, could you keep from tellin' Tom Morgan that he ought to go to Hell? Could you stand up and take pay for *not* tellin' him so?"

Northmore drew a long breath and hesitated for a full minute. "No, I could not," he said at last with the solemnity of a man taking oath of office. He realised how completely he had forgotten Quiggins' disability, and bent over to shift him a little. The man noticed the white pain in his face.

"I guess the blood turns you a bit sick," he said. "Maybe you could get a glass of something over at the saloon."

"Oh, no, I'm all right. I hope that you haven't talked yourself into a fever."

"Not much! Did me good. I haven't freed my mind like that for many a year before. I'm well enough to walk if my legs was any good. Did you say that you was goin' to Mogadonia?"

"Yes."

"You don't live there?"

"I am going there to live."

Northmore's manner precluded the one more question Quiggins would have liked to ask, and he had to content himself with studying the big, forceful young figure and cultivated face and trying to fit the man into some niche in his town—but none was appropriate. After a trying little silence Northmore produced a magazine and read an entertaining travel sketch to Quiggins, who listened with intelligent appreciation until train time. When his charge had been safely stowed in the baggage car, where he found an acquaintance, Northmore went to his own seat, conscience-smitten that this first opportunity for missionary work had found him dumb. What had he come out from the Seminary to do?

CHAPTER II

"MOG-A-DO-NIER! Mog-a-do-nier!" trumpeted the brakeman in notes of sonorous melancholy. Northmore roused with a start from his abstraction and glanced out to see the town, but from the level of the hillsides saw that the train had stopped on a high trestle. He took down his luggage deliberately and strapped in the book he had not been reading. The conductor turned back at the door with a solemn repetition of the warning and the brakeman looked in to make the same remark.

"Don't you go to the station?" asked the young man defensively.

"This is it now," retorted the man of buttons, with an air of ended responsibility.

"Yes, this is the station," confirmed a pleasant young fellow passing Northmore on his way out, and the latter caught up his suit case and plunged after him, landing upon the flat roof of the two-story station building which connected the high-level bridge with the town crouched in the valley beneath. Northmore stepped back to look after Quiggins, who was at once surrounded by the loafers that lined the railing of the roof platform and who peppered him with questions. Northmore briefly told the story, and selected an escort of volunteers to carry Quiggins to his home, which was not far away. While he was thus engaged two shabby men

were pulling at his suit case and quarrelling with each other about the respective merits of the two hotels, the Great International and the Grand. Having provided for Quiggins, Northmore was about to make a random selection when a tall, stooped old man with a little hangman's beard rose from the stairs and crossed to him, as he appeared to be the only stranger:

"I'm lookin' fur a preacher on this train—but I reckon he didn't come. A preacher—name o' Northmore."

The young man smiled oddly and the group paused to listen. "My name is Northmore," he said; "and I am—a preacher."

The man on the cot lifted his bandaged head in excitement: "Good Lord! A preacher! Well, you don't look it! You might have told me—and you takin' care of me all the time. Well, sir, I'm sorry I hurt your feelin's—but I pity you."

"It's no matter," said Northmore, taking his hand. "I am glad you talked freely. It was a rare opportunity to get that viewpoint, and I drew you out. I shall come to see how you are getting on. I hope you are not bad. Good-bye."

"Good-bye," said the man heartily; "good-bye, and thank you. The first time I'm able, I'm coming to hear you preach."

"Do," and Northmore turned to the old man who stood waiting for his attention and who had shaken his hand cordially while he was still speaking to Quiggins.

"This way, Brother Northmore; I'm mighty glad to

see you—but I'd never 'a' took you fur a preacher—never. Here, you, Dan, let his carpet sack alone. He puts up at my tavern this trip.—My name's Pocock—Square Pocock, I'm ginerally called."

"No—I'll carry that myself, Squire; I am glad to know you—and you were most kind to meet me. You lead the way down and I'll follow. What a—singular location your town has!" Northmore added cautiously, glancing down at the smoky roofs and black-cindered streets of his future dwelling-place. The heterogeneous buildings told of struggling growth, the principal ones huddled for lack of space in the valley under the trestle, while the dwellings wound in crooked lines up the hillsides as high as they could cling, terraced gardens showing still higher behind them, over their roofs. At the northern end of the valley loomed a promontory of bleached limestone known as "Old Whiteface," at whose base, on a tiny green flat, lay the squire's old house, low and wide, almost hidden by a huge grey boulder that had sometime fallen from the cliff, and stockaded by a wall of smaller boulders, evidently built to get them off the ground.

"Here we air," said his host, ushering the minister into a parlour gorgeous with gilt paper and gay Brussels carpet. "Jest walk in and make yourself to home while I call M'ria."

Northmore seated himself upon the yellow plush chair indicated, facing a remarkable work of art upon a table in the middle of the room, comprising a pallid ear of green corn, a cucumber, and a lemon surmounting a

basket of peaches and tomatoes, done in wax and covered by a glass dome. He had scarcely done justice to the artistic fidelity of the production when the squire returned with his elderly daughter, his feminine counterpart, tall, spare, slow of speech, with thin black hair carefully crimped above her narrow, dark face. There was that in the manner of the two which touched the heart of the young minister; a reverence for the emissary of God, whom they seemed to hold it an exalted privilege to entertain. The large, worn Bible on its little stand was the most conspicuous thing in the living room adjoining, and exhaled the atmosphere of the house, a permeating holiness which lingered in this primitive seclusion undisputed. Miss Maria extended a cordial hand. "Pa an' me air jest awful glad to hev you here, Mr. Northmore, an' we hope you won't mind our bein' such plain folks. We ain't got no style nor no newfangled ways, but we want you to make yourself all the more to home fur that. No, pa, he won't hev time now, fur dinner is ready. You show him to his room whilst I set it up."

Savory hints of this dinner had cheered Northmore on his way up to the house, but even his hungry scent had not foretold its bounty. Its royal abundance and quaint service, its shining linen, horn-handled cutlery, and the mulberry ware of another generation not only furnished forth a gladdening feast but delighted his eye as well.

"Now, Brother, just light in an' help yourself like you was at home," urged the squire, when grace had

been offered. "You'd better tackle that fried chicking fust," he added, as the guest did not respond. "Them springers is small yet, but thar's plenty of 'em." Which was obvious, for the platter was piled with exquisitely browned joints. Northmore understood that he was to serve himself, but his host was not satisfied with his selection and added a few choice pieces, following them in succession with mashed potatoes, cream gravy, big pearly "roasting ears," amber candied yams, stuffed tomatoes, jellies in coloured glasses, salad, and pickles of many varieties and overpowering abundance. Miss Maria did not sit down with the two men, but stood, white-aproned, to pass foamy biscuits, hot from the oven, and aromatic coffee in old hexagonal cups, with thick yellow cream. When the minister had done flattering justice to the dinner in sight, she cleared the table and brought an array of pies,—three kinds,—an old-fashioned pound cake, and translucent "preserves," in little glass saucers. The gloom which had settled upon Northmore's heart at the experience of the morning lifted perceptibly. Mogadonia might be a spiritual Gethsemane—but there were physical compensations. He was young, healthy, and fiercely hungry.

After dinner the two men sat in the let-in porch at the front of the house, drowsy with the still heat of the afternoon. It was deeply quiet except for the happy, discordant roulade of Miss Maria's hens, which gathered in the shade of the house, their wings hanging for coolness and one foot cautiously suspended at sight of the stranger. The squire talked droningly for a

little while, but fell asleep in the middle of the story he was telling, and Northmore was not sorry to be left alone with his problems of life. He looked at the circle of hilltops which barricaded the valley from the world outside, and wondered at the chance which had sent him to this remote spot for his first battle with the world-sin he was armoured to attack. He expected appointment to a flourishing suburban chapel which he had helped to found and where he had acceptably preached during his vacations, and had been so assured of it that he was not yet quite certain that Magadonia was not a part of the dream-stuff that had seemed to envelop him ever since he started on his journey to it. He knew that the Auburndale congregation had sent an almost unanimous request for him, and on the fateful morning of the Conference when the appointments were read he had settled comfortably in his seat with a feeling of pity for those who were in suspense. Auburndale was so high in the alphabet that he was immediately startled to hear, "Auburndale, James Bennett." It was a mistake! He would wait and hear its correction. He drummed his knee with impatient fingers while the list went on. Far down the line the monotonous voice of the reader reached, "Mogadonia, R. D. Northmore." A thin man beside him relaxed the tense muscles of his forehead and breathed a devout, "Thank God!" Northmore turned on him quickly, "Were you there last?" The man nodded. A little later, as the assembly dispersed, exchanging comments and congratulations, one of the prominent ministers had taken his hand

kindly with the admonition: "Don't be discouraged in the beginning, Northmore. You young fellows must prove your mettle, and there are more souls to save in a hard charge than a good one. Be faithful and God will bless you—and the bishop reward you later."

This had passed lightly enough at the time, but it came back seriously now that he was a citizen of the town, a responsible factor in its life. The man Martin's weak face rose before him with that "Thank God!" upon its lips. *He* thought Mogadonia had terrors—but there might be a difference in standards—and ability. Northmore smiled with the arrogance of virile youth, and stretched his long legs, cramped with the day's inactivity. What trouble could there be in this church for a six-foot young fellow equipped with all that the Seminary could give him of fresh artillery? He was rather sorry to have drawn such small game. He stood looking out over the landscape for a few minutes, when his host woke himself with a deep nod and coughed apologetically.

"I did not see Mr. Martin long enough to ask him anything about the size and condition of the church here. I hope that both are pretty fair?"

The squire sat upright, wiped some glistening drops from his smooth scalp with a red handkerchief, coughed again, and waved a chicken off the porch before he replied.

"Wall, yas, it's what you might call middlin'—fair to middlin'—as churches go. There's allus some gits soured toward the last and gits out of payin' dues,

but them's the ones takes hardest to the new preacher. Brother Martin were a powerful good man—but—I reckon he were—were a leetle slow fur Mogadonia. This is a lively town, an' we need a live man in it; why, we've growed over two hundred in popilation in the last ten year! Then his wife bein' sickly sort o' helt him back. They say he had to wash and dress them seven chillern fur school, an' he has been seen bakin' bread. Rock Creek 'll suit him better'n what Mogadonia did. You ain't married, Brother Northmore?"

"No."

"Yas, that was what we wanted. We 'lowed a preacher with fam'ly trouble oughtn't to tackle sech a big place. We're sort o' wore out with fam'ly troubles."

Northmore laughed. "Then you think a church can furnish a full line of infelicities without domestic assistance. Isn't that rather hard on the church?"

"Wall, I never heard of a church that didn't hev a scrimmage now an' agin. It 'pears that folks take their human natur' with 'em, even into the sanctuary. I reckon that's the reason they hev to die to git to glory; they can't shed their natur till they cast off the flesh."

The squire studied the stone fence with the reserve of a man who is no informer, and Northmore deeply respected the heroism which could withstand the chance to give his side first to the new minister; he also divined that a feud of no common order disrupted his church.

"What a magnificent landscape!" he said, turning away to release the squire from the personal subject.

“Er—what was it you seen?”

“This beautiful bit of country; it is interesting as well as beautiful.”

The old man looked at him in amused wonder: “Um-m, yas, it’s interestin’ to know how to get a livin’ off it, but I reckon you’re the fust man ever thought it was handsome. They is some right pretty corn bottoms on the other side of Whiteface, an’ a leetle medder land on the slope up thar, but the rest—wall, you wouldn’t see no beauty in it ef you had to plough round them rocks. The fields is tilted up slaunchwise and sot kitterin’ an’ no airthly good fur anything but sheep; you’d need to hang your plough on a rope to cultivate ’em, an’ cattle can’t graze thar good without claws.” The squire never laughed, but his smile broke unusual lines in his rutted face as he enjoyed this bit of chaff with the new minister. Northmore laughed good-naturedly: “It is pretty rough for farming land; that’s a fact; but I wasn’t looking at it from that point of view,” he answered.

“Wall, I dunno any other view could be took of it but as farm land. It don’t grow no timber wuth anything. The trees is so twisted you can’t hardly split ’em for firewood.”

“I’m afraid I wasn’t thinking of usefulness at all. It struck me as a noble page of the Almighty’s history—the story of Creation. This great outcrop—Whiteface, did you call it?”

“Yas, Ole Whiteface.”

“Whiteface has been thrown up there as an index of

chapters, the succeeding chapters of the earth's physical history; this big granite boulder which has possession of your lawn must be a dropped page from the great central moraine which was carried down from the northwest in vast ice fields. It is the finest example I have ever seen; I shall report it to the State geologist. He could tell at a glance just when it was deposited here. See this groove along the side—and the polish higher up where it has rubbed——” exclaimed the young man enthusiastically.

“Huh? Was you wantin’ to know how that grey-head come here?” demanded the squire in blank amazement.

“Yes. Of course it dropped to that particular spot from the cliff above, but it is evident that it was carried there by glacial force, for it is a totally different kind of stone from the limestone outcrop,” pursued Northmore with the delight of the late college man.

The squire stared at him incredulously. “Was you thinkin’ that ole greyhead floated here in the ice, Brother Northmore?”

“Yes.”

“If that don’t beat all! Wall, I kin tell you it never done no such thing! I was born in this county, and my father lived here all his life, an’ ef Indian Creek ever rose high enough or froze hard enough to fetch a rock like that over the tops of them hills, I’d ’a’ heered tell of it. Why, that greyhead weighs over two ton! Ef you re’ly want to know how it did come here, I kin tell you; that rock was sot thar by the Lord God Almighty

Himself, Creator of Heaven an' Yearth, on the Day of Creation. That's how it come in my front yard, an' that's why it stays thar, though it's a queer thing fur me to be tellin' a minister of the gospil. Folks has often asked me why I let it stay, an' I tell 'em it ain't because it's too heavy to move. It's because the Lord God put it thar, an' I reckon that are whar He wanted it to stay. Maybe them dents an' hollers in it is the prints of His own hand when it was soft. That's why I let it stay," and the old man regarded it with shocked reverence.

"Ah-h!" breathed Northmore with startled enlightenment and a quick movement backward as if he were losing his footing. He added aloud: "I will walk over to the church now, if you will direct me."

"I kin go 'long an' show you the way," answered his companion with odd reluctance. "It's right hot yet—but—maybe it's as good a time as any. I'll show you the way."

They went slowly down to the centre of the town, and the squire resumed in a paternal tone: "I hope I ain't hurt your feelin's none, Brother, but I know what a lot of blasphemious readin' young folks is put up to now'days. I had a time to git my girl broke of readin' 'em when she was in school. I tole her the Lord would 'a' give us more'n one book ef that wasn't all He wanted us to read, an' life ain't hardly long enough fur that. Why, in my day we was brought up on the Bible. Christians never thought of readin' anything else. I've set up nights as late as ten o'clock—when I was younger

—to read, an' there's chapters in Revelation I ain't got by heart yet. I've had a reasonable long life, too, but it ain't ben too long to get ready fur the Day of Judgment, an' I never wasted an hour yit on ongodly readin'. No, Brother, the Lord never give us no sech stuff as you've ben at, to read."

"I don't agree with you there," and Northmore's tone was tolerantly earnest. "I think that the Lord gave us no more because He wanted us to work out the rest for ourselves. Neither did He clothe us with fur nor give us caves to live in. But He did give us brains, and hands with which to plant and build and spin for ourselves in accordance with His design. Our reason is our noblest function, and I am sure that He never meant it to be atrophied by religion. He means us to think—and discover."

The squire struggled with this proposition in evident alarm. It was some time before he answered in a slow summing up of the whole question: "Wall, I've lived a heap longer'n—any young man, an' I never knew a Bible Christian to die onsaved yit—but I have knowed a plenty that read books to die in their sins."

Northmore made no reply to this sweeping conclusion, and the squire added kindly, "Ef young folks was so made as they could take a leetle advice, now an' again, of them that's lived longer, they'd larn without burnin' their own fingers. That's what I tole the stewards when they said it was your fust station; 'Jest be a leetle easy on him an' give him good advice now an' again, an' he'll soon larn,' says I."

"Thank you," said the minister with a queer blending of patience and consternation in his face as he looked down from his stalwart youth upon the bowed figure that had come out of the past to lead him backwards. By and by, retarding his pace to the squire's feeble gait, he drew out the details of the church dissension. It had begun—wall, there was no tellin' when it had begun unless it was with the building of the church, and factions had been forming and re-forming ever since. There was the building feud and the organ feud and the mortgage feud, and now—well, now, it was a combination of all these, with an added element in the parsonage trouble. It was a leetle rumpus, but maybe the coming of a new minister would sort of shame it away. They were walking down Main Street at this stage of the history—it was the merest outline—and the squire waited to continue in a less public place. Not that there were many people on Main Street, but they made up in interest what they lacked in numbers.

A group of collarless idlers smoked, whittled, and gossiped on the post office steps; they ceased all other occupation to give attention to the stranger. A young woman in a pink wrapper and white sunbonnet strolled before them down the sidewalk, stopping to put her head in at the open window of the millinery store and ask whose hat was being trimmed. The milliner, glancing up, saw the stranger over her shoulder, and the girl, following the gaze, gave a little scream and darted into the bakery next door, as if Main Street was normally as secluded on a warm afternoon as her own back

porch. A knot of boys stopped disputing the ownership of a hideous mask to stare oppressively, while a negro with a wheelbarrow of melons put down the handles to ask if Northmore were the congressman. One of the hotel runners who had heard his name at the station in the morning was on the porch of the Great International Hotel and immediately became a centre of importance. A woman in a brown calico dress and lace bonnet drove her spring waggon in front of the Grand Central Dry Goods Emporium and leaned forward to call: "Oh, Billy! Oh, Billy Canter! Oh, Billy!" at which the proprietor of the Emporium woke from his nap on the counter and came to the door combing his hair with his fingers. Both he and his customer gave their whole attention to Northmore as long as he was in sight. At the door of Moneypenny's hardware store a stout man with rolled-up sleeves and blackened hands stood chatting with a departing customer. He stepped out to meet the two.

"How-d'ye-do, Daddy? I reckon this is Mr. Northmore; how-d'ye-do, sir? I'm mighty glad to see you; I am indeed. I tell you now, Daddy, that Mr. Northmore is the very man to put us on our feet; I see that right off. There's nothing slow about Mogadonia, Mr. Northmore, but the trains, and we need an up-to-date minister. It's plain we've got him, too. I'm sorry I didn't get to take you to my house, but my wife's mother has been sick for the last three weeks, and before I knew how she was coming out, Daddy, here, got ahead of me. Moneypenny's my name; I'm one of the longest mem-

bers of your church; joined when I wasn't ten years old."

"I'm glad you did," responded Northmore heartily to the cordial tone. "I hope there are plenty of your kind in it."

The hardware merchant was going to talk longer, but a little girl came for a box of carpet tacks and he went back to get them. The squire—to whom nobody ever gave his dear title—moved reluctantly on.

"I give Jim Money Penny a chance to tell you the hull story, but I see he ain't no idee of doin' it, an' I 'low it falls to me," he grumbled, and took up his halting, evasive narrative again. The present situation was a culmination of all the old troubles, which appeared to have centred in one member. He was the one who had held the mortgage, and opposed the organ, and he now offered to sell his house adjoining the church for a parsonage. The place was so unsuitable and the price so high that the stewards had bought another house, better in every particular, for little more than half the sum asked for this one. And—it had made some feeling—some!

They had gone the longest way round to approach the church on its east side; the minister saw that at a glance. A wooden building adjoining crowded it so closely as to cut off its light. On the other side stood an old red house, at the edge of whose little yard, completely covering and darkening the remaining windows, ran a plank fence nineteen feet high, emblazoned with circus posters. Neither pastor nor par-

ishioner spoke for a moment. Then Northmore asked, "Do I understand that a member of my congregation did this?"

"That's right," admitted his guide.

"I think that I must know his name."

"It's—wall, it's 'Lijah Sims. He wanted to hold up the congregation for his old house—and they wouldn't stand it. It's a bad muddle."

CHAPTER III

THE last stroke of the tolling bell still quivered on the air as Northmore's resolute step took him out of the sunny September morning into the gas-lit gloom of his church for his first service. As he strode down the worn trail of ingrain carpet and saw, without looking, the leak stains on the walls, the boarded-up windows, and, facing about, the sprinkling of elderly people in the pews, he knew that he had come to a run-down church in the last gasp of inanition. He had longed for this day of beginning with the confidence of thorough preparation; he had done many first sermons in anticipation; but since coming here he had discarded them all and worked out a new one which he thought would appeal to these dwellers among hills.

When he rose to read the hymn he saw kindly greeting in nearly all faces. The most striking one was the fresh pink countenance of a young-old man who sat with his wife and daughter in the side aisle. The man's head was crowned with a shining aureole of straight white hair. His blue eyes sent a smile of welcome to the minister's heart. His wife was a small, austere woman in rustling silk, and the daughter was a timid girl of delicate tints and wistful eyes as blue as her father's. Immediately behind them sat the pleasant young man who had arrived on the train with Northmore, and

whom he had since found in the new drug store, which was the one well-kept, attractive shop in the place. His name was Harrington, and he, too, was a newcomer in whom Northmore found a bond of sympathy. On the front seat was a red-haired woman in dyed black, whose freckled face beamed such loyalty and devotion from the first that Northmore knew he had one fast friend. Well to the front was the pew of the squire and Miss Maria, their visible pride of early proprietorship in the pastor subdued by Sabbath gravity, while just behind them Mr. Moneypenny contributed to the occasion a row of sons of assorted sizes.

Northmore's strong tenor led the quavering notes of his congregation through the devotional exercises; then, in an expectant hush, he read from Exodus iv, 21, the text: "What is that in thine hand?" And again, "*What is that in thine hand?*"

The echo of his voice in unanswering silence chilled the enthusiasm with which he had wrought out his theme, and it was not until he could forget himself in his word picture of the oriental scene that something of boyish fire impassioned the drawing of Jebel-Mesa, rock-ribbed with crimson and purple diorites, its majestic crown cut in relief against the sapphire of Egyptian sky, guarding forever from desert blight the rich valleys, Wady-Feiran and Wady-esh-Sheikh. In the tremendous silence of the sacred mountain he found Moses pleading with God for the deliverance of his people from intolerable bondage. The quiet of the room grew intense as the story of the little rod by which that greatest de-

liverance was wrought was simply told—the rod whose power was faith and harmonious action. The Old Testament theme was the prelude of a direct appeal from pastor to people for co-operation and unity, yet the words seemed a mockery on his lips, addressed to those few feeble members who proved their unity by coming to hear him. He saw that mere words would never infuse new blood into this anemic body, yet his message grew so intimate that he appeared to be talking privately to each member, man to man. The dedication of his life rose big before him; here was a field for his best effort, barren enough for new sowing, but when he closed his sermon and the faint rustle of relieved tension had faded into unresponsive silence, a sullen weight of dread clamped upon his heart, his first vivid realisation of the smallness of one man's supreme effort against the vast aggregate of human need. He went shyly down from the pulpit when the meeting was over, with the longing of aroused sympathy softening his rugged face, but his towering form, well-made clothes, and scholarly bearing awed his people and, after lingering in expectation for a moment, they went out, talking in low tones among themselves. Only Mr. Money penny came forward to speak to him.

“That was a mighty fine sermon, Mr. Northmore, though it did lean pretty strong to Works,” he said heartily; “but I guess Works are all right if there's enough faith mixed in to save a man. I'm no stickler for doctrine, and I guess that's good enough doctrine for anybody.”

As Northmore retarded his steps to Miss Maria's, sauntering through the black streets in the noon heat, it flashed upon him that in just such measure he must curb his energies to the halting gait of these people, and the thought was intolerable. His vigorous nature loved action; his superfluous energy must always work itself out through his muscles; he required space and air; even now he felt a maddening impulse to break away for a wild tramp over the barrier of hills to the free great world which they shut out. Could he ever put down intellectual brakes that would hold him to the pace of Mogadonia? He did not delude himself with the fancy that he could quicken Mogadonians to his record. As soon make the squire a supple youth again!

This Mogadonia, then, this stupidly wicked town, was the realisation of his ideals, the goal of his long training; it was his "vineyard," his "battle ground," and all the other allegorical symbols of his Seminary dreams. Could he be so poorly equipped for any other possible situation as this one? He thought not. The grim humour of the thing curved his lips in a desperate smile as he cramped his steps beside Miss Maria.

Her excellent dinner was disposed of in reverent silence, and then the squire went into the porch with "the Book" for his Sabbath meditation. Northmore went up to his room, but felt suffocated by its heat. From the window he could see alluring slopes of woodland, and he accepted their invitation, leaving the road at the foot of the spur and striking a path which followed a little stream into the heart of the hill it had

cleft. Its deep gorge led him between walls of jagged rock that ended at a noisy cascade, a sheer veil of falling water over green-grey rock, whose pleasant monotone drowned the whirr of cicadas with which the woods rang, and made a sympathetic accompaniment to his thought. He found a seat upon a cushion of moss beyond the spray, from which he could see but a ribbon of blue sky between the fern-fringed walls above. He was keenly susceptible to the moods of Nature, and in the solitude of the place he seemed suddenly to get himself into perspective against his new background.

Under the disappointment of a realised expectation—what realisation is not disappointing?—a dread fear had been eating its way into his soul, the fear that he had made a tremendous mistake. He harked back in swift retrospect to the motive-forces which had led him into his calling, to assure himself that he really had been “called” to carry the tidings of salvation—and of damnation—to these people. Was he fit for that solemn office? Was he worthy to stand between them and God? He probed his heart with questions which he feared to answer. How did he know that he was anointed of God? What proof of it had he ever had? He reviewed his years to find it; his Godless home, his barren childhood. He shrank dutifully from the remembrance of his parents; the cold materialism of his mother, the sordid, pessimistic morality of his father, from whom he had inherited the very exactness with which he was now trying himself. As an only son he had been destined to carry on the business which was his

father's life passion, and which he, obversely, loathed, but the very individuality roused by this arbitrary decree had defied the older will, sabre to sabre, and had won. That is, Northmore had left home, penniless, an outcast, with the sovereignty of his own future. His father had denied him a classical education, which he held to be a detriment to a business man, and the youth set out to wrest it from fate on his own account, succeeding through sheer personal momentum where a weaker man would have fallen. After this, there was a time when his father would have forgiven the classics and put him at the head of the factory, but he had transgressed yet more deeply; he had chosen a profession, and, of all professions, he had chosen the one which his father held to be the quintessence of idle effeminacy, the ministry, and they parted forever. That meeting and its result were characteristic of both father and son. The father made all sentiment, all impulse, subservient to his Juggernaut, Business; the son could destroy all material considerations for his convictions, had done it, in fact. He maintained a clandestine correspondence with his favourite sister until her death, which early followed her marriage, after which his home ties were wholly severed. He went through these memories slowly, dwelling sorrowfully upon the loss of the little sister he had loved and whose life he had felt to be a sacrifice. He hoped to take her away himself and make a congenial home for her, but he was too late. These merged into pleasanter recollections, the eager beginning of his life purpose. The quivering tentacles

of ambition had gripped his work with characteristic energy and held it through the tense strain of Seminary years. It was not in his nature to keep ideals with a uniform grasp; he doubted them and worshipped them; he recalled periods of battle with his baser self, days and nights of passionate conflict, but, thus far, the ideal had always conquered. There were men in his classes who had been born good, who never knew the triumph of a vanquished self. Days of spiritual exaltation had followed these victories when a martyr's crown would hardly have satisfied his sacrificial zeal; times of burning enthusiasm and wild impatience for the holy fulfilment of his consecration in active labour; last of all had come a Pentacostal day when he was an empty lamp, waiting for Divine flame. And fulfilment had come! Did the rounded periods of his morning sermon carry conviction to his congregation? Would the word picture of the diorites of Jebel-Mesa uplift those dull, impassive people? There was sin enough in Mogadonia, rank physical wickedness that cried out to him for redemption, but he was at a loss how to apply his spiritual weapons to it; no power of theological oratory would stir those reeking depths—and what else had he to offer? It was not picturesque wickedness, either; it was evasively commonplace. The delimitation of inexperience inspired his soul. He would never be satisfied to minister to his congregation only; he was an apostle to the region round about—if he could find a point of contact.

The wicked would never come to hear him, only the

good; the good and the old who were preparing themselves for death; the wicked and the young who needed far more preparation for the solemn task of living were out of his reach. He was thoroughly trained to preach the gospel to those who believed it, but he asked himself how he should compel conviction upon the heedless. He heard his own voice echoing through the empty, rickety church of the morning: "What is that in thine hand?" and he reiterated to himself, wonderingly, "What *is* that in thine hand?" He lay back upon the soft moss, hands locked above his head, eyes gazing deep into the far blue above, brows knotted with thought, and tried to find an answer.

The growing darkness of the gorge roused him with a start. He had taken no note of time, and got to his feet in haste, knowing that he had wandered far; he walked uncertainly along the stream, dizzy with doubt, with a sense of unfitness, of helplessness, where he should possess power. The level shaft of sunshine which struck his eyes when he emerged into the road warned him that he must take a short cut back in time to be ready for the evening service, and he went through the lower town, crossing the horseshoe bend of the creek which enclosed a bit of land under the trestle known as Whisky Island. Its countless saloons were in full blast this Sabbath evening, and its cinder-paved streets were alive with barefooted children at play. Slovenly women in workday unneatness gossiped across their dooryards or scolded their little ones. From some of the blackened houses men with dinner buckets were

starting for the night shift in the coal mines, while from other doors floated the smell of coffee, bacon, and frying onions as supper was getting for those to come from the day shift. In every feature it was a sordid workday without a to-morrow. The minister was the one clean, Sabbath-clad person in all the grimy quarter. He could not hurry through it; he was too much interested in its life. A turn brought him upon an old tobacco shed crowded with children; the magnet in their midst was the man of the silver aureole, who was handing out slices of cold watermelon to them and talking in terms of perfect understanding. He appeared to know them all by name, and they were eagerly telling him about themselves and their play. A sudden hush fell upon them as the minister approached, and they resumed their talk in loud whispers, drawing still closer to their friend. Northmore passed on with a flash of enlightenment as the talk with Quiggins, which had hardly once left his memory, reasserted itself. He did not believe in cheap bribes to the poor, but he saw that he must find a point of contact with the outcast, a sympathetic medium through which he could measure their standards and know their temptations. He recognised that the first necessity was to find their justification. He knew that no human being willingly chooses the worst line of action; the choice comes through mistaken standards, justified by perverted reason. He must get at this root of evil first, and if life had a mission for him it should be to alleviate the wretchedness of this class of people, to carry to them good tidings of the gospel; to lead

them to salvation. Must he also tell them of future suffering to fall upon their dimly lighted souls? He wondered if they had ever heard of it. How was it possible for so many still to be in darkness after centuries of Christianity? Why had not its principles thundered their own verification to human reason at the first peal? He wondered at this as it took hold of him more strongly, and resolved that he would continue a side line of study which had fascinated him in college, the history of physical religion from its furthest rootlets in mythology, through the trunk of paganism, to the spiritual fruitage of Christianity. It would give him a new line of armament, and a securer footing in the eyes of those who could not see spiritual form.

The lights were burning as he hurried through Main Street, and he was surprised to find it gay with the apparent population of the town, and still more surprised to find how many of the promenaders were young people. His heart warmed with the thought that most of them were on their way to church; it was probably a custom of the town to attend service in the evening instead of the morning, and he made some swift modifications in his prepared sermon for the benefit of these young people. They were noisy and irreverent, but he attributed this to the freedom of their universal acquaintance. The unending procession flowed by the church door, round and round the square, increasing in numbers as the evening advanced and the churches were lighted. The loud laughter and coarse jokes smote the ears of the minister in the pulpit, but the pews held

only the old faces of the morning, and not all of them. The minister's heart was sore as he read the closing hymn. One day of practice had shaken years of theory.

The young man who walked out of the wide door that night was not quite the same one who had entered in the morning. The formative stage of his mind growth, in which faith had unquestioningly accepted and cemented beliefs, was closed; this day he entered the critical period of manhood when evidence must be tested by experience. Northmore the acolyte went to the morning altar; Northmore the analyst left it at evening, and closed the door behind him upon his mental youth.

CHAPTER IV

NORTHMORE felt that his first duty on Monday morning was to find the man Quiggins, who had been injured on the day of his arrival, and he set out to follow the directions given him as to the location of Quiggins' house. They led him through the southern end of the valley, which was cut off from the town proper by a long spur of Mount Moriah. Crossing this by a winding street, he entered a suburb whose bright newness and roominess were so conspicuous that he stopped to walk about its small park in enjoyment. A large, many-windowed building faced the park, from whose front door a man came quickly to meet and speak to him. It was the man of the silver aureole, the most striking personality he had seen in the town.

"Good-morning, Mr. Northmore. Glad to see you over here. My name is Garnett; I suppose you are getting your bearings a bit."

"I'm glad to know you, Mr. Garnett. I've heard your name several times already. This is your—establishment, is it?"

"This is my shop—the only pottery in town. Do you care to go through it?"

"Very much indeed."

"Then we will have to do it at once. I am sorry to say I am going to Wheeling this morning and haven't much time—but you will come again for a more thor-

ough visit, won't you? I think you'll be interested from what—— I liked the way you went to work yesterday morning."

"Did you? I'll get a little nearer to my people next time." Northmore could not accept commendation for poor work, especially from this man, to whom the sermon had been preached. "I fancy you saw the lack in it. Mrs. Garnett is a member of my church, is she not? I saw her name on the books."

"Yes, she is one of your most devoted workers. This way first. We'll take the stock room last."

Northmore was keenly interested in the system of the factory, which surprised him by its excellence, and in the man whose character it expressed, and his appreciation went to the heart of the owner as a tribute of value. The time was all too short, and Mr. Garnett followed him to the door with reluctance.

"I want you to come again when I can show you the inner side of things. You can't get an idea of what I want to do in this glimpse," he regretted.

Northmore turned to him with kindling eyes: "Indeed, I do. I have seen much more than you pointed out; I am familiar with factory life myself and I can detect an entirely new atmosphere in this one—that is, where the workmen themselves are concerned. Do you know what you have done? You have made your men principals; I don't know how you have accomplished it, but you have done the hardest thing; you have roused their enthusiasm in the work itself. You have eliminated the drudge and accorded to Labour its nobility."

The pink face of the owner glowed at this reading of his life motive. "No! Did you see that? No one ever did before, and I hope it is in part true. I don't want my men to consider their work drudgery; I believe they are rather proud of it. And you got it at the first glance! Well; you're going to know me better!"

They walked down the steps together.

"You have built a model village, also, and got them to live in it," added Northmore, looking down a shaded street of bright cottages.

"No, I don't call it that. The men couldn't get houses over in the town, and I had to build something; it was good policy to build homes that the men would like to own and the women to care for. It is good business to do that. Human beings respond to sanitary housing as much as horses and cows. The men already own some of them—I have a purchase system which works well for both of us. I can only credit myself with the buildings; the effect on the men is secondary—but, gracious! you should see the regulations. They make rules I shouldn't dare to suggest. I've been arrested for walking on my own grass—here in the park!"

"How you enjoyed that!"

"Well, rather!"

"I can understand how much," suggested the minister. "It was the reward of years—an interest of that strength; it is not the love of landscape gardening; it is the reflex development of manhood, of civic responsibility in the working man; it is his conscientious sovereignty."

"That's it! You've got it exactly. You've put it into words. No one else ever understood that this bit of grass and fresh paint stands for a new dignity in them; it's a big moral force—because it is their own work, don't you see? I couldn't possibly do it for them."

"You have done it for them in giving them the opportunity and incentive to do it for themselves."

"That is all that you can ever really do for any man—give him a chance to do things himself. There has been a fallacy in much of the world's philanthropy—doing things for people who might have done it themselves with a right start."

"That is certainly true, industrially, at least. Yes, the greatest thing you can do for a man is to make him work out his own salvation, physically," and Northmore's face lighted with this confirmation of a pet belief.

"He has got to do it in other ways, as well," ventured Mr. Garnett significantly, as he took out his watch. Northmore saw that the time was up, and turned to go, but Mr. Garnett called him back: "Where are you going to stay, Mr. Northmore? You have no family, I've heard."

"No, I must find a lodging. I came so late in the week that I shall have to look for one to-day."

"I don't know where you'll find a suitable place. I heard my wife going over the question. Come up to my house till you do; we have a lot of room and will be delighted to have you. Your reception is to be there this week; you know that, don't you?"

Northmore hesitated but a moment. The invitation was sincere and he realised that it was a fortunate solution of the problem for the present. The details were arranged at once and that evening found him established with luggage for present needs at a square, red brick house, topped by an observatory in ante-bellum style, which stood at the head of Walnut Street and at the foot of a terraced hillside. The interior was furnished in the depressing fashion of twenty years before, known as "Eastlake," yet the large, square rooms and wide hall had an atmosphere of home-likeness which overcame the dungeon pattern of the black and olive paper and the rectangles of the same colours in the Brussels carpets.

Mrs. Garnett was as small and austere in her home as she had appeared in her pew at church. She had large light eyes, set prominently, like an afterthought, in a colourless, triangular face; her voice was as toneless and sibilant as the frou-frou of her stiff black silk. The critical quality of her manner contrasted sharply with the genial sympathy of her husband's voice and grasp. Northmore could not quite make her out, and reserved his impressions for better acquaintance. Not of the daughter, however, the sweet, shy, porcelain-tinted girl whose eyes had asked help of him in the first glance in the church.

He had begun to feel quite at home by Thursday evening, the time appointed for the pastor's reception, when he was to know, hand to hand, the people whose spiritual leader he had come to be. They came early in

the evening, were received by Mr. and Mrs. Garnett and the minister as they filed in, asked the latter how he liked Mogadonia, seated themselves in a shy row around the wall, and relapsed into silence or murmured conversation. The funereal solemnity seemed to increase with numbers until it was broken by a burst of rich throaty laughter in the hall which thrilled everybody to responsiveness, while several said together, "There's Susan!"

Northmore turned to meet the newcomer, the shabby, freckled woman whose face had guaranteed her loyalty on Sunday. She met him heartily: "How-d'ye-do, Mr. Northmore? If you're goin' to take to us the way we've took to you, there'll be doin's in our church this year," and her cheery presence warmed the assemblage to life as she passed on around the room: "How-d'ye-do, Daddy Pocock—an' M'ria? Did them pickles come out right fur you, M'ria? Mine wouldn't harden. I knew there ought to be a lump of alum in the recipe. How are you, Auntie Bosley? How do you get on, Gran'pap Boggs? Glad to see you out to meetin' Sunday. Hello, Uncle Peter an' Azariah; pretty far walk fur you, wasn't it?"

"Is that Susan Jernigan?" quavered a deaf old lady with dim eyes on the buxom figure. "Susan, do tell me how Priscilla Munson is to-day; I ain't heerd sence a-Saturday noon. Mary Lib Pilsinger, she stopped in a-Saturday noon as she was a-goin' over to help her mother-in-law stir off apple butter, an' she said Priscilla was terrible low. She said they'd telegraphed fur Him."

"Yes," rang the rich voice, "Prissy is right sick; I set up with her last night so's to give Tilly Hopper a little rest, an' she surely was some better this mornin'. I fixed her some breakfast and she eat a little bit. He come a-yesterday; you know he's workin' down to Bellevue on the big church, an' he didn't want to lose his job. Why, here comes Jim Moneypenny an' Mary Fanny. Now, Jim, don't go to work an' ask the new preacher how he likes us, for he hasn't had time to find out. Here's Billy Canter, sure's I live! Now, Billy, the new minister ain't married either, an' if you want first choice of the fourteen old maids and the twenty-three widow women in our church, you'll have to spunk up an' hustle to get ahead of Mr. Northmore."

"Have they give her up yet, Susan?" inquired another old lady who had been waiting for a chance.

"No, *sir*, I haven't give up hopes, whoever has," stoutly responded the inspiring voice. "I told her so when I come away this mornin'; says I, 'Don't you let 'em go to work an' make a mistake, layin' you out for dead, Prissy,' says I, 'for you're wuth a stack of dead women yet, an' if folks just must have a funeral, you let 'em up an' hunt another corpse. Don't you turn in and die just to 'commodate 'em. Don't you do no sech thing.' An' she laughed. Oh, she's better."

"Well, I do' know 'bout that's bein' quite right, Susan," rebuked the first old lady. "She'd ought to sense her condeetion 'nough to make her peace with God. It would be a turrible thing if God took her unawares."

"She never had no quarrel with God," retorted Susan

with asperity. "I reckon that pore thing has bore her earthly troubles in a way to fitten her fur the Kingdom."

"Yes, Prissy's hed a hard place, an' she's done her duty well, but that don't count fur preparation. You know salvation ain't in Works, whatever they be, Susan."

"Likely He'll marry agin; his mother's too ole to keep house fur all them children," ruminated Maria Pocock.

"His sister Lib might keep house fur him, the one that teaches school," ventured Mrs. Moneypenny, a meek little woman with very black eyes, a wide smile, and no front teeth.

"She might—but she wouldn't. And if she did—oh, my! And Prissy as neat as a pin!" insinuated a fat woman with a mighty voice.

"Well, I tell you-all that Prissy won't be buried till she's dead; she'll walk over some of our graves yet. La, do look at that! The gall of 'Lije Sims to come to the minister's reception!"

All eyes followed Susan's to the front door, which a lean, bowbacked old man was obsequiously entering. A long frock coat was tightly buttoned around his tall form, and he carried a walking stick. Mr. Garnett introduced him to Northmore, and the minister scanned him closely. Before he could speak more than the man's name, Mrs. Jernigan's tones crossed to him: "I reckon Mr. Northmore feels set up over the decorations on the outside of the church, Mr. Sims. It's the only one round that has a nice double wall to keep out the light, and a lot of nice pretty circus pictures on the outside."

The old man's impassive face did not change; he gave the minister a cold, soft hand, murmuring in an injured tone, "I hope you're a man that likes to see fair play."

"I trust so."

"He wants to stand in with the preacher and hold us up for his old house yet," whispered Billy Canter. "Great joke on him that Mr. Northmore ain't married."

"Well, if looks is anything, that new minister has a backbone of his own, that he ain't afraid to straighten," remarked Mr. Money Penny, approvingly. The sound of the piano now gave an impetus to the scattered conversation, for as Silence Garnett touched the keys people who had sat dumb suddenly grew loquacious and drowned the strains of the beautiful Chopin nocturne with high-pitched talk. Northmore went to the piano to listen and to turn the pages. He loved music, though utterly ignorant of its technique, and when he led the girl to a seat after her unnoticed playing, he found that they were already friends through the wordless sympathy of melody. They were rapidly making each other's acquaintance when Silence stopped in the middle of a sentence, while her delicate face flushed to her hair. Northmore, his back to the door, wondered what manner of arrival could have so embarrassed her, and the next moment was shaking hands with the late-comer, Mr. Firestone, a slender man with piercing eyes set close together in his eagle face.

"I'm delighted to know you, Mr. Northmore, from what I have heard of you. I've been greatly interested in the state of your church, and hope that you're the

man to redeem it—as far as human effort can. How do you do, Silence?”

The girl laid a reluctant hand in his, and shrank away while Billy Canter interposed his cherubic face, tip-tilted nose, and big round glasses, as nearly in the spot occupied by Firestone's as the laws of physics permit two bodies to occupy the same space.

“Let's widen out this circle,” he suggested. “When two men like the preacher and Mr. Firestone get to talking, I want to soak in all the information. And I've been in——”

“Yes, we know,” cut off Firestone sharply, “but being a coffee clerk a few weeks isn't an investigation of the whole subject of missions. And you may have heard, Mr. Northmore, that that is the field in which I am trying to serve the Lord.”

“I have heard your name many times since I came, but I really know nothing definite about you. Everyone appeared to think that I did.”

“Shall I take this plate for you, Mr. Northmore?” asked Billy Canter. “You'd better sit down, both of you. I've been in Africa, and I can tell you that you don't get anything like Mrs. Garnett's coffee there—nor the cream in it, either. Oh, must you go and help, Miss Garnett? Well, you'll come back when you're through, won't you?”

Firestone gave an annoyed look at the little man, and talked directly over him to Northmore: “I am stationed in Abyssinia—a most fascinating field—and one in which strong men are needed. I sometimes

wonder how ministers, who are really called of God, can reconcile themselves to staying at home and living in luxury and ease—when almost the whole world is calling in benighted ignorance for Christianity.”

“That’s a personal decision for each of us, Mr. Firestone,” and Northmore waved away a plate of cake offered to him.

Billy Canter interjected a protest. “Just try that dark kind, Mr. Northmore. You’ll miss it if you don’t; it’s Mrs. Garnett’s specialty, you know.”

The minister obeyed mechanically, for Firestone was speaking to him with the zeal of an enthusiast: “There’s an impression abroad that any sort of man will do for the heathen, but I tell you, if the heathen are ever to be helped it will be by the brains and the self-sacrifice of the strongest men we have. And in Africa, too. It’s an awful question, how much the superior race owes to its dark brother.”

Firestone’s ice cream was melting on his plate; he had unconsciously taken every kind of cake that was passed, without wanting any of it, his dark hand trembling as he tried to pile up the slices, and his eyes burning. Northmore found himself mentally withdrawing from this uncomfortable fervour, and noticing that the lamp behind made Billy Canter’s large ears look like pink wings beside his cherubic face. Presently Silence returned, and in a flash he saw the two so strangely different faces of his companions change at her presence—and he understood. Firestone drew a chair to his side and asked her to take it. She did so as one bereft of

volition. Then the missionary went on, including her in his audience: "Yes, Mr. Northmore, the salvation of Africa is one of the awful questions. In India and China there is a degree of civilisation which prepares the people for the reception of the gospel. The Buddhist faith has many points of similarity to ours—but the African is hopelessly lost—and he doesn't know it. Think of that, a fetich worshipper who doesn't know that he is lost until the missionary tells him so. Think what a task to carry salvation to people who have no idea that they need it. They are marvellously tenacious of their superstitions. Before you can introduce a new faith, you must——"

"Empty them out of the old," suggested Billy Canter.

Firestone glowered upon him scornfully, and went on, "You may imagine what such a task means."

"Is it required of us to begin so far back as that?" mused Northmore. "I should think that a waste of the highest energy—something that might be done by the day labourers of civilisation rather than its brains—which are all needed in——"

"Don't say that!" burst out Firestone. "I've heard that till the place is sore. Our workers are not worse needed at home. The people who say that simply show their ignorance. The most degraded criminal here knows more than a savage; there's need of strong men and—devoted—women."

The last low word sent a pallor over Silence's face that made Northmore rise and ask her to play again,

but Mrs. Jernigan called Firestone to tell her group the story of the first marriage ceremony he had performed, and Silence begged off from the music. So they talked a few minutes, in which he formed an estimate of her character. She was easy to read, a purely feminine type, sweet, pliant, conscientious,—even morbidly so,—with a trace of melancholy in her eyes that betokened a capacity for exquisite suffering. She had not inherited either her father's poise or her mother's rigidity of purpose, though it was possible that her rightful strength of character had been atrophied by over-training, for her independence of action was apparently quite destroyed. They had found a common interest and were talking animatedly, when a general homeward movement called Northmore away, and as he offered to walk home with two old ladies, he did not see her again.

As he returned from this office he met Mr. Firestone at the corner by the barricaded church, apparently waiting for him. Both men glanced painfully at the bareback performers, in the light of the street lamp. "What are you going to do with this proposition, Mr. Northmore?" asked the missionary.

"I have no idea."

"There's only one thing that hasn't been tried—and failed."

"What is that?"

"Prayer."

"Prayer! On the spite fence?"

"Why not on anything?"

"It hadn't occurred to me as a remedy for this."

"Then you're not consistent."

"Possibly." And Northmore wondered at the antagonism which this autocrat of his own calling roused in him. He moved on, and the other turned and fell into step beside him, as if he had been waiting for an interview. They walked silently for a block, then the older man began with character, directness, and force: "I'm going to tell you, Mr. Northmore, right in the beginning, that I'm exceedingly sorry that you're not married, and that, being a young man, you're an inmate of the Garnett house—and the pastor."

"Ah?" said Northmore, at a loss for better answer.

"Yes. I am trying to persuade Silence to return with me—as Mrs. Firestone. My station requires a married man—and I have lost my wife—my beautiful, gifted wife. I lost her just as I started for home."

He paused to control his voice, and went on after a few minutes: "You speak lightly of prayer for temporal things. Let me tell you that I could hardly have lived through that bereavement without its solace—and that beloved wife came to me through its agency—in direct answer to it. She was the noblest, truest helpmeet that a man ever had, the best wife, the best mother. And God took her!"

Northmore put out his hand. "You have known the greatest human loss," he said stiffly, too reserved to express his genuine sympathy.

"It surely is. And she was a miracle. It was near the time of sailing, when my station was suddenly changed, and I must go to the new one, a married man.

I was single. I laid the matter before the Lord in prayer, and suddenly thought of the minister of your church, whom I had known at the Seminary. I wrote him of the situation, asking if he knew a suitable person. He replied that a young lady of his charge had prepared herself for missionary work, and I came on immediately, was introduced to her, the most beautiful girl in town. I called upon her, told my predicament, asked if she would accompany me in the required relation. She consented; it had been a passion with her—against the wishes of her parents. Within the hour our plans were completed. We made some hurried arrangements for our marriage and for our journey, and within two weeks were on our way—husband and wife, to that far country—from which she was never to return. She gave seven years of grand service to the Lord, and then came our time to return for the eighth year. We were waiting till she should be able to travel—full of bright anticipations for this first homecoming. She was eager to bring her children to her parents. We sat one evening and built our air castles—the next—she had—gone—home—with her little one in her arms!”

“Good gracious!” said Northmore. “It was hard for you to live—afterwards.”

There was a long pause. Firestone could not speak. At last he went on in a forced tone: “I came home—bereaved—with my three little children—whom I must leave here. My year is almost up. I cannot return—unmarried. And I have selected Silence Garnett, of whose charms you were so conscious this evening, as the

most suitable woman I know—to return with me. I have made a formal proposal to her—which she is now considering.”

“Miss Garnett!” and Northmore turned and looked at him.

“I thought I had better tell you frankly just what the situation is—so that—you are thrown with her so much——”

“So far as that is concerned, you needn’t have any fear—but—Miss Garnett—why, she is an only child—and she isn’t even a member of the church!”

“No, but she ought to be. Her mother feels that this very thing would rouse her to a sense of her duty. I count upon her influence. I hope, Mr. Northmore, that I may also count upon yours.”

Northmore’s answer was instantaneous. “No, Mr. Firestone, I am sorry to say that you cannot. I couldn’t imagine a girl more unfitted for such a life than Miss Garnett—nor one who might be more easily coerced into it. And besides—your heart—is with your lost wife. You have nothing to offer her but a marriage of convenience. Even your holy calling will not condone that. I am brutally candid, you see.”

“I thank you for that. It is better to know where you stand. If you are to be my rival, I hope to win in spite of you. Good-night.”

CHAPTER V

NORTHMORE called on Elijah Sims the morning after the reception, and found his man sitting at a rough desk in the little pine office of his lumber yard, his narrow head bent over a ledger. He responded to Northmore's greeting in a low tone and with evasive eyes as if cordiality would commit him to something. The caller seated himself with an air of permanence, and the lumber dealer squirmed apprehensively in his chair and turned a leaf of his ledger.

"I see that you are busy, Mr. Sims, and I will state my business at once. I have come to confer with you regarding your fence over the windows. I have a formal request from the church that it be removed."

Mr. Sims gave a little gasp at the directness of the statement. He studied the page before him for some seconds before drawling in his reluctant speech: "Wall, I do' know's I hev anything to say to you or to the members about it. When the church does the square thing by me, I'll do the square thing by the church. That's business."

"I don't think that is a fair statement of the case."

"Wall, I hev bene a pillow of that church fur thirty-seven year, and hev give to it liberally, and hev advanced money when it was needed, and only charged a legal rate of interest. The church has never give me back a

cent, nor done a thing fur me, and the time has come when I want it. Ef you want to be on good tarms with me, you'll tell the stewards that they ought to take my house fur a passonage. Ef you've come here to take sides agin me, why, I reckon me an' the church 'll hev it out alone."

Northmore straightened in his chair. "Do you look for a temporal return from the church of the help you have given it? Do you expect to force the issue by desecrating the house of God?" he asked earnestly.

Mr. Sims rubbed the side of his nose with a lean forefinger and looked hard at a waggon which was being loaded before the door. Northmore stirred impatiently, stung by the other's contemptuous silence.

"You certainly do not mean to injure the church to which you have belonged for so many years. You don't realise——"

The old man turned to him with a thin, cruel smile. "The Supreme Court of Ohio has——"

"I know it has, but even the Supreme Court cannot legalise such a crime against the public good. Ownership is not so absolute as that; all within the commonwealth must conduce to the common weal. In a case where law is obviously illegal, we who profess to follow the law of God must revert to its higher code. Our law is, 'Love thy neighbour,' and 'Do unto others.' We are forsworn to that law, Mr. Sims."

"Wall, they's allus two sides to a story, and to a law. That church dessicates my house, too. I can't sell it for what it's wuth, next lot to a church. I've

been holding it a long time, 'lowing that the church would hev to buy it."

"I understood that you sold the church lot yourself—but granting that it is an injury, a spite fence is no remedy for it. Two wrongs never make a right—and no member who is guilty of inflicting such an injury can expect to retain his standing."

Mr. Sims stared blankly, with dropped jaw, at the minister. "Huh? What did you say? Wall, I guess you'll find out who you're tacklin' before you git through with puttin' me out of *my church!*" His hand wavered uncertainly about his mouth, which smiled cruelly again. "When you-all git ready to talk business to me about my house, I'll talk to you," he said.

A dark flush surged over Northmore's face. "Mr. Sims, you are the one member of this congregation to profess Christian perfection. Doesn't that mean anything?"

Mr. Sims leaned back confidently before he answered. "Wall, the law is on my side and—I've allus found the Lord on the same side as the law. I reckon the best I kin do is to leave well enough alone."

Northmore sprang to his feet, biting his lips for self-control. "Mr. Sims," he said with sudden gentleness, "let us pray."

"Huh?"

The minister and his stiff-necked parishioner, who could not refuse the invitation, knelt together in the tiny room and the old man could but listen to the forcible petition which poured from the lips of the younger.

He was wiping the perspiration from his head when Northmore faced him again.

“I will call to-morrow to see what the Lord has given you to decide. Good-morning,” and he was gone as abruptly as he had come.

The first man he met as he climbed the steep street from the flat was Mr. Moneypenny, who stopped him to say, “Mr. Northmore, do you think that we can ever do anything about Lije Sims’ fence? I don’t s’pose it would do to speak to him about it—but a letter—or something might be written, don’t you think? We’re up against it hard, there, and I can’t see a way out.”

Northmore winced. “I think we had better try moral suasion first—and then—well, *he* has the law!”

The hardware man gave his fat, kindly laugh. “Moral suasion is all very well on a human man—but you don’t know Lije. He’s as cold as a fish—but whatever you can think of to do, there’s one thing certain, the church will be with you.”

The lumber office was locked the next morning, and the morning after. Northmore had taken a book with him on the third visit, and though he waited for hours and was sure that he saw a vague figure skulking among the leaning stacks of plank, the office was still deserted, nor did he succeed in catching its owner there again, though his vigilance was untiring. It was fully a month before he found another opportunity to pray with his obdurate member. Meanwhile the spite fence stood, gaunt and hideous, a herald to the world of the internal dissension that tore the society. At the end of this

month Northmore was discouraged enough to be in favour of heroic measures—if he had known of any. He especially felt his helplessness when Mr. Moneypenny rose in prayer meeting and said earnestly, “The subject of my need to-night is not personal; it is the terrible disgrace of our beloved church, and the detriment to its usefulness. Our pastor has tried moral suasion and prayer in vain, upon the member whose oppression we feel. What are we to do when these fail?”

Mr. Firestone was on his feet at once. “Prayer never fails. We haven’t prayed enough.”

Northmore smiled, remembering how unconsciously he had tried that advice. But Mrs. Jernigan was on her feet. He liked Mrs. Jernigan. “I was one of the temperance Crusaders, twenty years ago,” she began. “I saw every saloon in this town closed by the power of prayer. I saw it work on a stubborn sinner, and I reckon it will work as well on a stubborn saint—if you apply it right. You want to apply prayer like a mustard plaster, right onto the spot; that’s the way we did it in that wonderful Crusade. We went to the saloons, the women of this town, and we stayed there day after day and applied our prayers to the sinners right in their own saloons, till they couldn’t stand it no longer. Now that’s the way to pray for Lije Sims. Let’s go and hold a prayer meeting in his office and in his house, a prayer meeting that won’t end until the Lord batters in his hard old heart and smashes down the spite fence.”

"Amen, sister!" responded a dozen voices.

"Then the sooner the better," she urged, and the people rose with one impulse and flocked to the adjacent house. The surprised owner opened the door at Mr. Moneypenny's knock. He lived alone in the house with his elderly son, his wife having given up her life struggle long before.

"We have come to hold our prayer meeting with you, Mr. Sims," explained the merchant briefly. The old man uttered an inarticulate sound and backed into the hall, closing the door after him. Nothing daunted, Mr. Moneypenny said, "Then we will pray outside," and kneeling on the steps, offered a short, fervent petition that the Lord would lead His servant to respect the tabernacle and remove the impediment which now so sorely shackled His church. The sincerity of the simple appeal was heartily endorsed by its hearers. At its close, a ringing hymn was started which attracted spectators from all directions, as if it had been a fire alarm. It was the hour when Mogadonians were strolling the streets seeking entertainment and soda water and eager for a sensation. Before the second prayer was ended, an enthusiastic crowd blocked the street, while the ubiquitous small boy, wild with delight, filled trees and fences with himself.

The meeting closed at the usual time. If there was any force in the frankly expressed sentiment of his townspeople, Elijah Sims certainly got the benefit of it through his closed shutters. The matter was practically taken out of Northmore's hands, though he had

not uttered a word of opposition; he felt that no apology was needed, and he awaited developments. The crowd scattered unwillingly when the meeting was over, though half-grown boys lingered for hours in the vicinity. The next day school children, as well as older folk, walked by to see the old red house and stare with renewed interest at the huge fence, and in the evening idlers gathered from far and near hoping for a renewal of the siege. The house was dark, possibly in the same expectation. When nothing happened, however, the boys, not to be disappointed, instituted a private crusade with a battle yell, which echoed in high treble voices through all parts of the town, far into the night:

“Oh, come on, 'Lijah Sims, and take your spite fence down!
Take it down! Take it down! Oh, tear your old fence down!”

CHAPTER VI

A LIGHT shower fell sometime during the night, and the morning sunshine distilled spicy fragrance from moist earth and ripened leaves. The hillsides blazed gold and crimson behind velvet green of wheatfields, and October haze lay like purple bloom on round hilltops and distant curves of valley. Northmore could not resist the invitation of the beloved forest, and pocketed the notes for his sermon of the next day, intending to draw his inspiration from the flaming solitudes. He was still an inmate of the Garnett home, pending some necessary alterations of Mrs. Jernigan's small house, where he was to lodge permanently. He went down through the town to get his mail, and stopped in the post office to look it over. As he came down the steps afterward, with his letters in his hand, a girl drove up to the curb before him in a smart runabout, both girl and vehicle unlike anything that he had previously seen on the streets of Mogadonia. She leaned forward to look around in puzzled inquiry. She was so handsome, so distinguished in manner, that he hesitated a moment before offering the assistance that she evidently wanted, then, meeting her eyes, he stepped out to her, lifting his hat.

"Allow me—shall I help you out? Do you want him hitched!"

"N-no, it doesn't seem to be of any use," she replied in a disappointed tone. "There has been some mistake.

I was to meet the children of the town here—the poor children—and taken them to Heathermuir for the day—but something has happened. The notice could not have been published—you don't know of any other reason, do you? Oh, I am Miss Morgan. I thought everyone here knew me.” The last in answer to his puzzled eyes.

A light broke upon Northmore; the shadowy name of Morgan had glanced about in his hearing without any materialisation, ever since he had been in the town, but, since the story told him by Quiggins on that first day, no one had spoken ill of it, and the impression he first received had grown less vivid. He now remembered seeing a notice and advertisement in the paper that Miss Morgan invited the children of the town to meet her at the post office steps on Saturday morning for a day at Heathermuir, but he had got no meaning from it and had forgotten it. She was asking a solution of him with her eyes. He glanced at the post office steps. Two shy, neat mulatto children waited there, hand in hand.

“No, I don't know of any reason. I saw the notice in various places. I am the minister of the church opposite. My name is Northmore.”

“I wonder what can have happened? I expected so many and hoped they would come; I have music and games and kindergartners to entertain them—and things to eat—oh, dear! It is an utter failure. Can you tell me why they wouldn't come? Look here!” The street behind her had filled with vehicles of all descriptions

from a shining victoria to a row of green farm wagons marked "Heathermuir" on the side.

"How can I ever get out of town?" she appealed with moistening eyes.

There was in her manner such an instant recognition of the protector in Northmore, such a sweeping away of conventionality, that he could but meet her friendliness on its own plane.

"I am utterly at a loss to explain it, Miss Morgan. I thought it a noble thing to do; there are certainly a great many children in the place who look as if they never had had a pleasant day. Possibly some were not even able to get here, supposing they got the invitation."

"Then how—what shall I do about it?"

"Why not drive over to Shantytown and Whisky Island and gather them up?"

"Surely. What a good idea—but—I couldn't do it alone."

"I think you could."

"No, I should be afraid of them. Can't you go with me—and your wife, too? I will drive round to the parsonage."

"I will go with you if I can help you—but the parsonage is empty. I am not married."

"That is too bad; your wife would be a help. But we can go quicker without her. Get right in, and I will send back part of my retinue. How many vehicles do you suppose we shall need?"

"We may get twenty or more children on such short notice. But I don't know anything about it."

"Twenty! And I planned for two hundred. Father said there were five hundred in town."

Northmore took his place beside her and she directed most of the waggons homeward, telling the driver of one which she retained to pick up the two coloured children. She handed the reins to Northmore. "You will know where to go better than I do. I have been away for several years."

He drove to the quarter through which he had walked on that first Sunday evening, stopping at a house across the creek where three unkempt children in dun-coloured rags played on the cinders before the door. Their mother, a sharp-faced American woman with snappy eyes, came from a back room, wiping suds from her arms.

"What do you want of them?" she demanded.

"Just to take them for a happy day in the country. It's so lovely now," pleaded the girl.

"Ain't you Tom Morgan's girl?"

"Yes."

"Um-hm. Well, I ain't got time to fix 'em up."

"Oh, I will take care of that. If you have no other objection——"

"No, I guess they can't go. No, they don't have to, if you must know, Miss Morgan. We're poor enough, but we ain't that kind of charity."

"Never mind," consoled Northmore as they turned away. "We'll have better luck at the next house. She's a tartar."

The next woman was a Hungarian, just over, who

wore a funny plaid petticoat and remarkable home-made shoes, constructed from pieces of carpet, and nearly the size of porch pillows. When she finally understood that her children were wanted for some unknown reason, she barred them inside the door with her arms and shook her head in frightened refusal. The next five houses had Polish and Russian occupants, and though they swarmed with children, not one could be borrowed for a day of pleasure, although they could easily have been hired for work.

"An' is it the childher ye be wantin'?" smiled the gracious Irish woman whose house was last in the row. "An' is it in the beautiful carriage that yourself is goin' to take them into the counthry? Indade it's that glad they'll be to go, Miss, barrin' that Patsy has no shoes an' it's Katie's dhress that's on the line. Will yez be stheppin' in to wait for thim? "

"No, we will call here on our way back. Be sure to have them ready."

At another house three youngsters were found who could be put into visiting order immediately, and by this time the girl had fallen into the spirit of the chase, and could take rebuffs without wincing. A thorough canvass of the quarter netted about twenty children of eight nationalities. As they left the last street to drive round to the bridge, a solitary cabin clinging to the gravelly hillside above attracted their notice. "We had better go there," advised Miss Morgan; "it looks poor enough to be full of children."

A man with bleached face and hair sat in the open

door, and behind him could be seen a ghostly figure in a bed. His weak form shook with paralysis, yet he was not an old man.

"No, there are no children here," he said shortly.

"You have sickness, though," and the girl's tender tone was sympathy itself.

"Yes, we have nothing else."

She looked at the man with struggling recognition, and flushed a little at his querulous tone. "You will let me send you something—so much is needed in sickness—or—I live so far away—if you would order it yourself"—she was crushing a bill into his pale hand and turned quickly away.

"Who are you?" he demanded.

"It doesn't matter—why, yes, I know you now—but you have changed so much. You are Mr. Ellis; you used to work for my father when I was a little girl. Have you been ill long?"

The man was in desperate need; he looked eagerly at the bill—a large one—and at the sweet, pitying face, then he held out the money to her. "Here, Miss Morgan, I can't take this. I don't want your money."

"Please do, please—or let me do more than that."

"No, Miss Florida, I take none of your charity."

His tone was final. She turned away and he tossed the bill after her. She carried her head proudly when they drove through the town again, but her cheeks burned persistently. Northmore knew something of city slums and their ready mendicancy, but this problem was of a new order.

"You will go out home with me and help me through, won't you? You have saved the day for me—and much humiliation," she said as they returned to the post office.

"It is quite impossible for me to go—and you will get on much better alone," he answered, turning back to add, "You're not going to let one little backset discourage you?"

She smiled doubtfully. "No, I—guess not—not if I can find a way to improve upon it."

"You can do that in the light of this experience. That is the only school. There will always be rebuffs and obstacles—but you mustn't mind them so long as the benefit is perceptible. The failures are the training, you know."

"I suppose so. I fancy Ellis, that sick man, must be out of his head. He surely needs help, and there was no reason for his being so proud. His eyes looked very wild."

"Yes. The morbid unfortunate are the most difficult to help. But you will soon learn all the values of these obstacles, and then you can do great good."

"Really, do you think so? Thank you for the encouragement and for your timely assistance to-day. Good-bye."

He watched her drive away, wondering if the doors of Shantytown were closed against this beautiful girl in her armour of good breeding, for sufficient cause. If she, with every accessory at her command, failed, what could he hope to do? He walked out of the town and around Old Whiteface, to his favourite nook on the

other side, a jutting crag overlooking the larger valley in that direction. It was crowned with a group of maples, now a mass of floating gold in the brilliant morning. He looked down the richly cultivated landscape of the valley, fed by an artery of gleaming stream, deflected at the end by Blue Mountain, whose thinning tree tops revealed for the first time to him the turrets and gables of a great stone house. This must be the home of the man of the shadowy personality which had haunted him since the morning wait at Bellevue—and of the girl of most real personality, who haunted him now. While he gazed, a procession of empty vehicles emerged from the shaded road and entered the iron gates at the foot of the hill. That, then, was Heathermuir. He turned away, stretched himself upon a drift of yellow leaves regardless of their dampness, and drew out his notes. His sermon was in a nebulous state, there was much yet to do. He read the top line—what did he intend to make of that? He could not remember. He read it again—he must work fast, for he had lost most of the morning. What could he have meant to do with it? He read it once more. A big scarlet leaf floated down upon the paper before him; a tiny Canadian wren perched in a hazel bush at his head and was not frightened. A pillow of moss invited his head; from it he could see the deep pure blue of the sky through the lower branches. The little wren turned his head from side to side looking at the long figure. It seemed to Northmore only a few minutes that he was looking into the arabesque of gold and blue before he heard the

town clock strike one, his dinner hour. He sprang to his feet, conscience-smitten at the wasting of the morning, for the scarlet leaf still lay upon his page of notes. He hurried away intending to do penance in his study that afternoon and work out a sermon that would make some impress upon his congregation—which dwindled week after week. The story Quiggins had told him on that first morning was proving itself day by day. It was true that the one member in his church annulled his best effort; that so long as Elijah Sims and his spite fence deadlocked progress in that church, effort was entirely superfluous.

The afternoon was no more productive of great thoughts than the morning had been; he was thoroughly disheartened, and the incident of Miss Morgan's failure had a meaning for him. He tried to write his sermon, but destroyed each page as he completed it. He wondered if he could ever hope to rouse his apathetic church to action—but what had he to offer it? He remembered the day when he had scorned the idea of difficulty in this charge, and wished for metal more worthy of his steel!

He was still grinding nervously at a first page when the supper bell rang, and he gladly joined the cheerful family circle, hoping to rid himself of the stupor which appeared to possess his faculties—and to exclude from his mind the event of the morning—and the presence of Miss Morgan, which still seemed to be at his side. The sitting-room was so attractive after supper that he lingered before the wood fire which flashed pink lights

into its grey corners and over the girl at the piano. Silence played the Mendelssohn Hunting Song for him—her musical education had been thorough—and he talked over a late book with Mr. Garnett, and went back to his work re-enforced for a new beginning. The streets resounded with hideous noises, however, which on this particular evening wore upon his nerves to distraction. He accounted for them when he heard the “plunk” of a cabbage against the front door. It was hallow-e’en. The pandemonium increased with the license of the holiday, until he gave up and went to bed, oddly enough falling asleep to the croak of tin horns, the jangle of cow bells, and yells of savage mirth.

His first waking impression was of consternation over his unwritten sermon. Well, what did it matter? he asked himself. He would improvise something to fill in gaps of thought. His best work would not move his people—his worst could do no less. It was another day of topaz and amber light and sapphire sky. He looked down upon the effects of the night’s pranks, incongruous with the peace of the day. A heap of stolen gates filled the street in front of the Garnett house, from which wrathful owners were trying to select their property, while the grave and dignified residence itself was bedizened with the signs of a free lunch saloon, a Chinese laundry, and a livery stable, and its steps were covered with all the cigar Indians in town. The trees in front bore grotesque fruit in variety, and a cow looked helplessly down from the court house roof. The quiet of Sunday morning was disturbed by angry voices of

the victims as they compared notes of injury. Northmore went to his breakfast thinking that few could go to church with such excitement for diversion. He was scarcely seated at the table when a caller was shown into the parlour who asked for him, and he found it to be Elijah Sims, breathless and red, confronting him with eyes of wrath. He took no notice of Northmore's courteous "Good-morning," but began abruptly: "I just want you to come over to my house and square up a little."

"What for, Mr. Sims?"

"For what you done, destroyin' my property."

"What I have done?"

"Yas, you and nobody else is to blame. You put 'em up to it. This town with all their deviltry wouldn't never dared to tackle me ef you hadn't sicked 'em onto me fust. You're the fust man that ever did me up, preacher or none, and if preachers wasn't allus beggars I'd hev the law onto you. I will anyway—maleeciously destroyin' property."

"Whose property, Mr. Sims? What has been done?"

"You know very well. Like's not you was there. They had a leader, all right."

A sudden light broke over Northmore's face. "Do you mean to say that the spite fence was torn down?"

"That's what you done; every plank of it. Now it won't do no good to say that you're sorry."

"No, I shall not say it. You have told me great good news."

"Oh, you're glad, are you? Glad! That'll sound nice in court—minister of the gospel leading a mob agin his own member—ruinin' a hundred dollars' wuth of property."

"I am only glad that we have been freed from that disgrace. Was it burned?"

"No, wuss'n that. They took an' tore down that lumber an' nailed it onto my house. Yas, sir, they took an' boarded up every door an' winder in my house, nailed them planks on with eight-penny nails so solid I don't see how they'll ever come off. Ef they hadn't left a ladder stannin' up agin the wall I do' know how I'd ever got out. Me and my son was canned in there air tight; he had to climb through the trap door onto the roof an' shin down the ladder an' rip boards off the kitchen door—Sunday mornin' at that—before I could git out. Yas, sir, that's what you're goin' to answer for—an' it ain't no laughin' matter."

"It has never been a laughing matter, Mr. Sims, or it would not have incensed the people to taking the affair into their own hands. Of course, they went too far, as lynch law always does when it must supplement inadequate laws."

"It was your prayin' that sot them on. They took an' painted the golden rule onto the front, in letters a foot long. Oh, I'll get even with you!"

"If you call this an answer to prayer, your quarrel is not with me. I did not dictate to the Lord the manner of His answer—and it is not a crime in this country to pray as we choose."

The minister rose with an air of dismissal, and his caller got swiftly to his feet. "Wall, all I want to know is, who is goin' to pay me for my lumber?" he asked meekly.

"You have still got your lumber, and I will see that all the real loss is made up to you. Good-morning, Mr. Sims."

He was so preoccupied with his unfinished sermon that he could not give a thought to even this removal of his burden, but worked until the tolling of the bell, and walked unthinking into the door of the church, where he paused a second in amazement. The pews were crowded to the end for the first time, with expectant people, upon whom streamed the light of the splendid autumn morning. He swung down the aisle to the pulpit with his long step, thrilled deliciously with the triumph of the moment, but by the time he faced the congregation his honest conscience had turned its searchlight inward, and a hot wave of shame surged over him. While he rolled out the words of his first hymn, he was thinking: "Nothing but cheap sensationalism has brought this crowd. The best work I could do failed to reach them—but let them think I am a mountebank—a rioter—anything but a good preacher—and look at them! It was not to hear a sermon they came. It was to see a show!"

His strong voice led the singing as he reflected, "Must I blow a tin horn to lead men to God? A pulpit buffoon is the grossest of blasphemers; I have been worse. I have made a mockery of prayer, for I used

the name of the Most High in petitions which were addressed to Public Sentiment, and which were answered by Public Sentiment—never by God!”

The words of his prayer faltered upon his lips in shame. He was searching himself for sincerity, to know if he were addressing this invocation to God or to his congregation. Was he *honest* in begging for special forgiveness, special blessings, special guidance of the nation's rulers? Would God really grant these things for his asking? Would He withhold one iota if this prayer were never uttered? His words failed. There was a long breath in which the clock thundered passing seconds at him. Then in a humbler tone he asked that he might know *Truth* and tell it to men, that Divine love might uplift men to Divine living and the link between God and His creature be strengthened. To this came the inner response of genuineness. He had asked for the spiritually possible, to which he expected an answer. The sermon that followed was the worst, structurally, he had ever done, but every word of it was sincere, and the people listened as though he were printing it upon their hearts.

CHAPTER VII

It did not surprise Northmore to come upon her again unexpectedly; he had hardly turned a corner since Saturday morning without a sense of disappointment that he did not meet her, hence it appeared to be quite in the natural course of things that she should be sitting alone in her broken runabout in the middle of Indian Creek Rapids, below the bridge that was being repaired, reading a magazine and eating an apple, when he galloped round the curve of the hill on a morning of the following week. He splashed into the shallow ford and stopped his horse at her side. She looked up with a laugh.

"So it is you, Sir Launcelot? You materialised on that other morning for my especial benefit, and I am in almost as great need of a rescuer now as I was then. Do you go about seeking forlorn maidens?"

"I have never been fortunate in finding any before. Have you been here long? How did it happen?"

"Dandy hates to wet his feet so bad that he tried to cross without stepping in the water. He got the trap into a hole, and it frightened him a little, so he just plunged himself free—luckily he broke loose before he began to run—and then he started off like mad. I hope that he went home so they will send someone to look for me, yet it will frighten them terribly if he did. I

have been here quite a while; I never knew before what a solitary road this is."

Northmore was silent for a moment, puzzling. She looked up with a laugh. "Don't you know what to do with me?"

"I don't quite see how to get you out of there—unless—you can mount behind me. Can you do that?"

"Certainly, if your horse doesn't mind."

"I will go round to the other side, then—here, give me your hand—now—jump—so!—there! Now we are all right."

Mr. Garnett's pretty dapple grey pranced and snorted a bit under the double burden, but carried them safely to the bank, which was so steep that the girl kept herself from sliding back into the water only by a firm grip of her rescuer. When they got ashore he insisted upon dismounting that she might ride home, but she scorned the suggestion.

"No, indeed. We will go this way, if you please; I want to get there soon to save father from a fright if I can—and we are going to have full credit for the adventure; one doesn't often happen. Father wants to meet you, anyhow; do you know that you are the greatest fun that ever happened to Mogadonia? We laughed till we cried over that spite fence performance. It was simply great. You can't know Mr. Sims as father does, and he is eager to meet the man that matched him."

"Please don't! You would spare me the mention if you knew how much I am ashamed of it."

"You have no reason to be. It was just right, and it was the only way out of the predicament—except to pay blackmail. But I must tell you about Saturday. I had a ghastly time with my children. They refused to be happy, except the Irish family, who were as delightful as the mother. The rest sat round in speechless gloom, or stood on one foot and sucked their thumbs, utterly refusing to be amused by any of the entertainments I had for them. It was shriekingly funny to see them put through the games, and I was sorry enough to cry, too. They were so positively wooden that they were even afraid to eat. They sat on the edge of their chairs and spilled everything they touched. You never saw such a pitiable farce in your life. What do you suppose was the matter?"

"I don't know."

"Honestly, Mr. Northmore? You must have an opinion."

"It is possible that in the democracy of a country town there is no class of people willing to be marked objects of charity. I know of nothing else that would account for their reluctance."

"Then you think it was a tactless way to reach them?"

"Yes, rather, if you want me to be candid."

"Do. No one ever is, you know. I hadn't thought of that; these must be different from the city poor."

"They are. Class lines are not drawn here as in the city."

"That is true. Every American workingman holds

himself the equal of any other man in the country. Now how am I to convince them that it is not charity in that sense? I want to do something for the town; I love it. I lived here all my life until I went to college, and now, when I come back and want to do—a few little things for my friends—I am shut out. Even the girls I used to know at school have forgotten me. Silence Garnett is the only one who has ever called since I returned. And it hurts me—oh, so much! Now if even these poor foreigners reject my hospitality—I must be an ogress in a castle!”

“You were away some years, were you not?”

“Only five in all. It is quite level here, suppose that we walk the rest of the way. I can talk to you better, and I know that you can help me to retrieve my failure.”

Northmore dismounted and helped her down and they walked some distance in silence. As they came in sight of the iron gates of Heathermuir she added with feeling, “I want the girls to know—that I am not changed, that I would love to—make up to them some of the things that they don’t have. Indeed, I should love to make it up to the whole town if I possibly could—whatever of privation they have. It is a dreadful thing to have—more than one can possibly use or enjoy—and feel that other lives are barren, even of necessities! It makes one feel like a criminal.”

“I see,” said Northmore simply. He did not know what else to say.

He was beginning to see that the barrier between

herself and her old friends was far wider and higher than she suspected.

The great stone house into which she led him might have been a fashionable club, a hotel, or even a public building, but he would never have thought it a home. He followed her through wide dim halls, past great drawing rooms which still smelled of new furniture, and into a long library of unworn volumes. She seated him at last in a small music room which opened into a conservatory. "Father will soon come up from the office, and I will call mother at once," and she left him, to return in a few minutes with a stout, short woman of noncommittal eyes and colourless face, who was gorgeously attired in a trailing robe of cardinal and white brocade velvet. Her fat fingers were so encrusted with gems that she could scarcely bend the knuckles, while a collar of pearls showed under the laces of her neck. She gave the minister her patronising finger tips and spoke with an acquired accent. Almost immediately the master of the house entered from the grounds at the side, and Northmore saw face to face the man who had already been a factor in his destiny, through sheer force of influence. He was a spare, clean-cut man, whose long upper lip bulged slightly when his firm mouth was closed. He shook his head anxiously at his daughter's spirited account of her adventure.

"You mustn't drive Dandy again," he commanded. "I will give orders that he is not to be hitched up. He is only a saddle horse anyhow."

"He is all right if I don't have to ford streams with him," she pleaded.

"We don't know what to do with daughteh," drawled Mrs. Morgan to Northmore. "She weally is a naughty child to wandeh off without a gwoom aw chaperon aw even a footman. I am quite wohn out with anxiety about heh—she has done so many weckless. things; it is so common to dwive about the country alone as if she was a vulgah mahket woman. It looks so cheap."

Miss Morgan's sweet laugh rang out pleasantly after her mother's difficult effort.

"It isn't safe, Florida," said her father.

"Well, you know, mother dear, that I learned to ride over these hills when I was a little tot, and we hadn't any coachman or groom, and you were too busy to go with me. I rode my pony to school alone when I was eight years old, and I have driven a span ever since I could hold the reins. Now that I am a remarkably strong young woman, I never know what to do with a ridiculous mummy in boots and buttons in these hills where game is scarce. I love to go alone—unless I have real company. Now, father, you must know that this is the man who vanquished Mr. Sims. You said that you wanted to know him, and, presto! I produce him," she laughed.

Northmore's face coloured under the keen glance of the other, but in the enthusiasm with which his host began a discussion of the moral welfare of Mogadonia, the unwitting hurt was forgotten. He was surprised at both the interest and the knowledge of Mr. Morgan

concerning the different churches of the town and their standing.

"I can't see why all the churches in that town should be in a decline, when in all the surrounding towns they are especially thriving," he declared. "I am glad to see a fearless man in one pulpit, at least. You know that I am interested in them all for the town's sake. I live just half way between Mogadonia and Bellevue, and I feel a sort of responsibility for the welfare of both places, in a moral way. One trouble has been, the lack of leaders, of any man strong enough to start a new movement. And I can see plainly that you are the man. You have already made a hit, and you want to follow it up at once with the movement for a new building."

It was between the courses of an overelaborate luncheon that Mr. Morgan reached this point. Northmore, never ready of speech, looked at his host in silent surprise.

"You entirely overestimate me, Mr. Morgan. That affair was the accident of inexperience, and not directly my doing."

Mr. Morgan replied in a tone of rebuke without lifting his eyes from his plate. "I have known you fully half an hour, Mr. Northmore; too long for me to be mistaken in any man. I know what I am talking about."

"I wish that I could see a possibility of working my congregation up to enthusiasm over any sort of betterment—but the outlook is discouraging," responded Northmore regretfully.

"There's only one plan for the moral betterment of

any place—to vitalise its churches. Don't you know the Lord's way? All along through the Bible, when any patriarch went into a new country or started a new enterprise, the first thing he did, he builded an altar to the Lord. Before he engaged in his enterprise he laid his offering on the altar. Now, our altar fires have burned pretty low in Mogadonia, and, as an active Christian myself, I want to help revive them. Bellevue took up my offer with gratitude, and is building a fine edifice. Now, you are the man to begin the movement in your church, and the others will follow. I am asked to build libraries, and a town hall, and a hospital, and an orphan asylum—while all the time the place is sinking deeper in sin. It is growing more Godless every day—but with all other progress, no new way of salvation has been proved. We have to go to Heaven through the blood of Christ, just as our fathers did, and I propose to make that my mission—to help open the way to salvation in this wicked town—and others of its kind. And I want you to start the ball.”

Northmore thought hard for a moment, but his mind did not work quickly.

“It is such a vast proposition, and so much is involved, that I must have time to think it over.”

“Certainly; I like you none the less for that. And this is my proposition: Whenever you want to raise thirty thousand dollars for a new church, I have thirty more to match it. You see I am an old-fashioned Christian. I am not offering to build a church-theatre, or restaurant. When I was a boy earning five dollars a

week, I gave to religion what my companions spent for tobacco and drinks. I've never yet been rich enough to buy a drink of whisky or a deck of cards. I've never gambled, even on a baseball game—nor do I even allow hot meals to be cooked in my house on Sunday, while every servant is expected to attend church. In return the Lord has prospered me beyond all expectation, and now I want to do something more for Him."

A picture that had been a little dimmed during these few weeks sprang before Northmore's eyes as this matter-of-fact statement was concluded with an air of duty fulfilled; a hot, dusty morning, a cot in the sparse shade of a tree by the railroad track, and Quiggins' earnest face as he told his story. Could that story be true? There were always two sides—he must reserve judgment until he had heard the other. This seemed the more reasonable because he had never heard the story from another source. The conversation drifted into another channel, which included the daughter, while Mrs. Morgan assisted with an occasional irrelevant remark. Northmore wondered if her husband had found her a comforting sedative to his nervous alertness. And the daughter?

He climbed with her to a rustic summer house at the top of the hill to see what she told him was the finest view in the country. It was an impressionist day—a day of purples, with scarlet and cloth of gold shimmering through the haze that veiled the opposite hills, and a breath of May softly stirring the leaves overhead. Below stretched the valley, marked with white farmhouses

among the emerald of wheatfields and the warm umber of garnered corn. Lacey white bridges spanned the stream here and there, the farthest one showing the break that had caused their adventure. He swept the landscape slowly with his eyes, and back again, seeing nothing in it but the girl at his side, in a spell that he was unable to conquer.

"Of all the places in the world, this is the one that I love best," she said when he did not break the silence. "I bring my books up here, and I sometimes try to sketch it—but I have never succeeded. It is like a dear familiar face—you can never get the soul into it."

He turned away from the pearl and opal clouds lying soft against the blue fire of the sky, of which he seemed to be a part for the moment, to the girl who delighted in the rare pageant, looking at it with lips apart and tender eyes aglow, in vivid, radiant beauty, a glorious young priestess in her temple. He allowed himself but a glance at the expectant, uplifted face, then turned dizzily back to the landscape.

"It is a fine view," he said flatly.

She stepped back in disappointment. It was the first time he had failed her expectation. He looked so long without speaking that she laughed softly: "You do love it, after all. I was quite disgusted that you didn't at first."

"I have loved these hills from the first day—and this is the most wonderful spot of all."

"Oh, Mr. Northmore," she cried with sudden remem-

brance, "tell me something I want to know. Is Birdie Garnett going to marry Mr. Firestone?"

"Ask me something easy. I am not in Miss Garnett's confidence."

"Does he come to see her?"

"Quite often. Yes."

"And you allow that? Outrageous! She's the sweetest thing. Why, what have you been doing all these weeks that you have been in the house? You must marry her yourself, to save her from him—it is your plain duty. You know her mother would give her a living sacrifice to missions—or anything in the church—and Mr. Firestone took the brightest girl from this town once, to die in Africa, and that is enough."

"Mr. Firestone is a thoroughly sincere man."

"They make the worst husbands of all. Now promise that you will go right home and make love to her in earnest. I sha'n't have a minute's peace till I know that she is safe. It's between you and Mr. Firestone, for Silence is foreordained to be a minister's wife—and once you two are married we should all be such friends; we should work together building a *crèche*—or something else for poor children. Now, please!"

"You are presuming a good deal upon my self-esteem—to intimate that I might rival Mr. Firestone. Why don't you go for Miss Garnett?"

"She might think I wanted to marry him myself. Now you are unkind. I had begun to like you immensely—and the first little favour I ask, you refuse!"

"It wouldn't work. My eyes are the wrong colour—as the story books go."

"Then you might at least divert her with a little flirtation—until he is switched off. She would refuse you—and nobody would be harmed. Joking aside, Mr. Northmore, I am awfully worried about that—and it must not be allowed! If you won't be accommodating—as a man—you must make it your duty as a minister to talk a little—to somebody—give a little good advice. Now," she commanded, "sit down by the door where you can see that mountain of pink cloud over the top of Whiteface, and I will make you a cup of tea."

She had taken out her tea things from a pretty cabinet before he could protest, and he lingered for a second cup, knowing every moment that he *must not* stay in that presence. Afterward he led her down the narrow path, her soft firm hand clinging to his over the steep places, and they waited together in the portecochère for the dapple grey to be brought. As Northmore sprang into the saddle she cried, "Now, gallant Sir Knight, rescue my hapless maiden from Africa or you shall never wear my colours. And you've no time to lose."

He turned back at the curve of the drive to lift his hat once more and carry away the picture of her—in relief against the grey column, then he rode between the big gateposts into the valley of enchantment where he knew not whether Polly were treading clouds of rose and pearl or a glorified earth. Every nerve thrilled with a new exhilaration; he still felt a lightly clinging

arm under his and the electric touch of a hand within his own. In his ascetic life he had never before known a woman like this one—but was there another? Within the little span of a day revolution had come to him. The magic of wealth had offered to turn his shame and failure into success—while undreamed-of eyes had looked into his and set his senses reeling.

CHAPTER VIII

IT was too late to fulfil the mission upon which he had set forth in the morning, and Northmore had to postpone it until the next afternoon, when he again set forth on horseback among the hills. He was returning toward evening through a pass whose interlocked branches were so thick that he did not see the darkening sky until big drops rattled upon the fallen leaves. A short deflection over a road of talus rock led him to the shed of a stone quarry for shelter, where he was surprised to find his early acquaintance, Quiggins, as foreman. He was not yet strong enough for active labour, but had been glad to take back what he told Northmore was his former job.

“I vowed I never would work for Tom Morgan agin—you remember what I told you about him the first day I saw you—before I dreamed that you was a preacher?”

“I haven’t forgotten it.”

“It was too bad you took advantage of me that way—but I guess you’ve got some human nature in spite of your job! And it was true—all that I told you. Have you found that out yet?”

“I have been compelled to accept some of your philosophy.” Northmore had drawn Polly into the shelter and seated himself upon the inverted keg which was offered. “I hope that you are misinformed—or preju-

diced—about—your employer. I have met him—and he certainly is interested in doing good. It is a close question—I can't yet decide—whether to take the responsibility of choosing those who shall further the work of the church. None of us is infallible.”

“Wait till you find out. I told you he was as slick as butter. You've already done up one man—that was the best thing ever happened in this town. You're no common preacher—that's plain—and if you have the sand to stick to your colours—well, I don't s'pose you'll make any money out of it, nor any glory, but a few common people will know that you're both sensible and honest. Not every minister gets to know that other side, you see.”

“I appreciate that—but Mr. Morgan has a side as well. It is not fair to be prejudiced either way.”

“Well, you found out that I told you the truth about 'Lije Sims. He lowered your whole church to his level. He was your weakest link—as long as you stood by him. Now, you've gone up fifty per cent. for kickin' him out. You watch and see the kind of people that comes to hear you now! You'll get them that was never inside that church before. It ain't so much what's preached that my kind of people cares for, it's what's lived. We ain't such fools as we're taken to be. Know Proctor Garnett yet?”

“Yes, very well.”

“There's a man that's believed in. If Proctor Garnett should found a church or an institution or a lodge—or want an office, every workin' man in Jefferson

County would be at his heels. And he don't profess nothing."

"I see what you mean," said Northmore gravely. "It's a tremendous task—to make over human nature on a model of that kind. I don't see any light on the subject."

The rain had settled into a steady downpour and he left as it was growing dark and plodded homeward through slippery mud. Soaked to the flesh and stunned in spirit, he left Polly at the stable and walked through the sodden garden where in the morning he had helped Silence to gather great bunches of chrysanthemums and late roses. Then it had been gay with blossoms, now a few rain-pelted flowers hung upside down where russet and umber prevailed. He had barely time to change to dry clothing before the supper bell rang, and its pleasant sound reminded him that he had but a few days more in this peaceful house which had been so kind a home to him, as the little quarters at Mrs. Jernigan's were nearly ready. The sitting-room looked more attractive than ever that stormy evening, with its beautiful fire tinting the faces around it and drawing out fragrance from the roses and pungent bitterness from the chrysanthemums. Northmore did not feel like talking, and took refuge in a book. Not for long, however, for the few minutes at the quarry had brought back with new force the story that Quiggins had first told him, and he went up to his room to seek anchorage in the tumult of new experience which the last few days had precipitated. He smiled bitterly, putting on his slippers before

his own fire, to think that he had been so shaken by the opinions of a man who had probably never read one thoughtful book in his whole life. That there was truth in Quiggins' point of view was the sting of it. He who was to lead others to Truth, was in doubt himself. But, once alone, in deep thought before his fire, his hands locked behind his head, reactive conviction asserted itself, and he was candidly and fearlessly analysing his relation to the complex forces which bore upon him when a tap on the door announced Mr. Garnett.

"I am glad to find you at leisure, for I want to take up a little of your time. I would like some help," he apologised, seating himself by the table and spreading out a roll of blue prints.

"I am never too busy to give you any help in my power, Mr. Garnett," replied the young man, trying to summon attention.

"Thank you. I've had a sort of plan in mind for years—I mentioned it the other day, if you remember—and the interest you've shown in my ideas has led me to think that you could help me to perfect this. I want to do one thing more for my men over there—or rather for the families—and it ought to be done now. Many of the children have grown to an age when they need something that their parents can't give—nor their schools. We don't like to own it—but Mogadonia has a bad reputation in the vicinity; you've noticed how few representative young people there are. The better set of them get out and go to the city as soon as they are able to. Those that are left are what we call in business,

the 'seconds,' the 'culls,' you know; those with a flaw, and they go to the bad pretty fast. A very nice man, one of my decorators, was talking to me to-day with tears in his eyes about his children. It made me feel responsible for not having given some assistance to the parents before, but I didn't know just how to develop my scheme."

"What is your idea?"

"A place to supplement the little homes. There is nothing now in the way of innocent amusement—or educational pastime; there was a so-called 'opera house' here until it burned down last spring—an old tobacco house furbished up, yet people used to stand in line half the night before the ticket window to get a chance in the morning, and in this country town three and four dollars a seat has been paid for a poor entertainment. That's what suggested the idea. The only place where a concert or lecture can be given is Joe Fury's dance hall—and you know what that is. We haven't even a circulating library."

"And our churches are the worst of all," suggested Northmore.

"They are pretty bad, but even good ones would not fill this place."

"Not a modern institutional church?"

"No, not to those outside its own membership—and not altogether to those inside. I will answer your objection before you make it; it would not compete with church influence enough to be considered, and would be such a moral factor that it would strengthen

you in a general way. The parents would not be drawn away from church, and the children are growing up with so much larger requirements than the parents had, that they will go outside for fulfilment—and it is this need I anticipate. The children of my artisans will not be artisans in their generation; it is training for those faculties which have already outgrown the parents' capacity that I want to provide. It must be an institution that will first attract, then elevate and educate them unconsciously above the reach of the low temptations to which they now fall prey, and which will help to keep the 'firsts' at home. There is but one place where the young men can gather, the saloon, the poor man's club and the devil's parlour. Now I want to devise a social club that will have more than the freedom of the home, besides the uplift of an educational institution."

"That is what the church should be."

"Not in this town; it would be impossible; it is locked for six days and four evenings a week—while there are rows of bright places that are open. My club would be their rival and the ally of your church. You can help me and help your own cause indirectly."

"What amusements would you have?"

"All that are innocent." Mr. Garnett pushed his blue prints toward Northmore. "This is my audience room—which must also be open to any religious denomination for services. There are a few Episcopalians in town who have no meeting place, also a few Jews and Universalists."

Northmore lifted his eyes to the other man in sur-

prise. "You are not a member of any demoination yourself, I think?"

"Yes, I was brought up a Quaker, but we have no church here. But we are all soon to be members of the great universal church; we can worship together now."

"Yes," said Northmore with yet larger respect for this man. "These, then, are the plans for such a building as you have suggested?"

"No, they are not. I tried to tell a Pittsburgh architect what I wanted, but he didn't get the idea at all. You can get the suggestion from this, however."

Northmore concentrated his attention upon the scheme and, with a little elucidation, saw its points at once; his first comment was so intelligent that Mr. Garnett seized upon it eagerly.

"You've got it! I was sure you would. I've had no one to consult. My wife has her own line of interests, you know, and my daughter—well, a daughter is not a son. It is quite natural for her to follow her mother's example—and it is right. That's one reason why I want to carry out my plans while I am in the prime of life; there will be no one to do it after I am gone."

"Have you never talked this over with your daughter?"

"Not in detail, no. To tell the truth, I don't think she would understand; she is constantly with her mother—as she should be, of course—and—I did not want to appear to be diverting her from her mother's religious views. She is reserved and sensitive—I wish that I might have her confidence—I wonder sometimes if even

her mother really has it. She might care very much for such an interest as this. She will probably, however, follow her mother's example, and devote herself wholly to the church."

"I have wondered what her fulfilment would be. I have feared—a little, that——"

"So have I," and Mr. Garnett looked away from his plans in tense anxiety. "I don't know what to do about that—not being in her confidence, and not having the same ideas of duty that my wife has. I don't want to interfere with either her convictions or her affections—but—she is all I have, Mr. Northmore, and you see how delicate she is. I don't know—what to do about it," and he looked wistfully into Northmore's eyes with the weakness of deep tenderness in an armour of strength.

"I think that the strain of such an abnormal life would mean simple martyrdom to Miss Garnett," returned Northmore frankly.

"Do you? And you think I should be justified in interfering?"

"If you think that is true, I don't see how you can help it."

"I am glad to know that you think so—immensely glad!"

He looked into the fire, abstracted, for a few minutes, while Northmore studied the blue prints, and then they went through them together, discussing details, changing and amplifying, until midnight, when they parted, Mr. Garnett in deep satisfaction at the help he had obtained upon two dearest objects.

"Now, I am going to work immediately—just as soon

as I can get these new plans and specifications drawn," he announced as he gathered up his papers. "There are a few people in the town who will enter into the project, and my own men will take it up almost unanimously. I don't believe in letting them think they are not doing it themselves, you know. I can put ten thousand dollars into it—and they must do the rest. You have helped me more than you know—and I appreciate it. Good-night."

A few days later Northmore submitted Mr. Morgan's proposition to the official board of his church, where it elicited such diverse opinions that no conclusion was reached and the question was held over. Most of those present thought the amount too large for the little church to raise. Others felt that the offer was so munificent that it should be accepted at all odds, and cited the success of the Bellevue church in raising the same amount. No other consideration was discussed. A few days later, Mr. Morgan sent for Northmore to know whether an agreement had been reached, and was told of the situation. He had evidently expected it, and asked who had stood for, and who against it.

"It is all we could expect at first," he remarked. "It frightens them usually, and then they come to it. It will need your influence in this case because they are so conservative—but you can bring them to it. No church has ever yet turned down my offer. They may take as long to decide as they want."

"Is the amount you offer also flexible, Mr. Morgan?"

"No. My object in making the offer is to bring the

churches of this town up to the standard of fifty years hence. I will not help to build a cheap church. And it is to the advantage of the congregation; the more they raise, the more they get for nothing, you see, and they will make the effort and be proud of it in the end. I hear that you had a crowded house again last Sunday. Now is your opportunity—and you can raise a monument to yourself that will be of great advantage in your career.”

Northmore did not answer, and his host gave him a quick scrutiny as though wondering at his lack of enthusiasm. Miss Morgan chanced in at the office while Northmore was still there, and was surprised—and pleased—to see him.

“Won’t you come up to the house and help me with a problem, Mr. Northmore?” she begged seriously. When they were outside in the grounds, she explained: “I simply have to do something to efface that dreadful day of failure. It must be wiped entirely out with a success; it will torment me until it is. What shall the eraser of it be?”

“What are the possibilities?”

“The largest possibility is my college chum who is coming next week, and who is the most wonderful success at this sort of thing. She goes in for college settlement work and the like. She gave me the idea for the other exploit—but she had succeeded with city children, and, as you say, they are different. Have we no claim on these?”

“If we have not, some of us are wasting our lives.”

"Surely. It isn't worth while to keep only Christians in the strait and narrow path—to be a literal shepherd of one's own flock. There are the two kinds of pastors, you know, and I believe that you are the sort that goes into highways and byways."

"But not to the neglect of my legitimate work, I hope."

"Oh, no. Father thinks that of you, too, and he approves of it. Father is so good; you don't know him yet. He is more than kind to us, and he almost gives his life, now that he is removed from business cares, to doing good for others and in philanthropy. He encourages me in that mission, too. Think of it—I can have unlimited money with which to do good—and I can't find any to do!"

"That is a dreadful state of affairs. We will find a remedy for it at once."

"Yes, you must. Of course, I don't need to say that I want to do real good—not simply to rid myself of responsibility by indiscriminate almsgiving. Bring Bird Garnett out to dinner to meet Olive Drysdale, my friend, who is coming next Thursday, and if you have a suggestion by that time, we will find Olive the cleverest manager in the world. She has wonderful executive ability, and will enjoy it, too, which is fortunate, as that is almost the only entertainment I can offer her. Can you come out on Friday?—well—then, Saturday? And we will set things spinning then. One thing more, Mr. Northmore; who is ahead in the wooing, you or Mr. Firestone?"

"I haven't the ghost of a chance. Mr. Firestone is a cyclonic wooer."

"I am afraid that's not a joke. You are not going to let that go on without a protest, are you?"

"It is a very delicate question, but I have already expressed my opinion to Mr. Firestone himself, since you ask."

"I ask because I am worried—and I am glad to know that you are alert. Won't you come in?" They had reached the house and Northmore knew that he must go, yet he yielded to the spell on which he drifted helplessly into the pretty music room. He never could remember how long he stayed, nor what they talked about, but late in the afternoon he found himself riding home through the valley of Paradise, under a witchery that leaped in his blood and dazed his brain with magic so dangerously sweet that he was powerless to dispel it. For the first time in his lonely life, he had talked with one who understood him, even without words, who looked at him with frank, unconscious eyes, and saw his very soul, its nobility, its human weakness, and who sympathised. All else in his life was dwindling into insignificance beside his longing to be in her presence. The days until Saturday, when he should see her again, lay blank before him. That there must be an awakening, he would not now consider; he held no future anguish in the balance against the delight of the day. He could not work that evening, but dreamed late by his friendly fire, that pleasant confidante which tells none of the secrets entrusted to it. He completed his week's work on Friday

night, that he might have the following day clear, and retired late. It seemed to him that he had not slept many minutes before he was awakened by a sharp knocking, and Mr. Garnett's voice at the door. He said that Northmore was sent for to go to a dying man; would he go?

"Certainly. Who is it?"

"A poor fellow whom you don't know; a man named Ellis, who lives over on the spur."

"I will go at once. I know where it is," answered the minister, rousing himself to this first call for his holy office to the dying. A boy was waiting for him in the hall, and he hurried away as soon as he could dress. The boy told him on the way across the town that Mr. Ellis had been no worse than usual until the previous morning, when he had fallen in a fainting fit and the doctor had said that he was dying. It was with a curious dread that the minister entered the dim room in the solemn hour of the night and crossed to the bed. It appeared that an internal fire, rather than disease, had burned out the man's vital forces, for the skin drawn over his corded hands and hollow features was white and firm, while the clear eyes were not dimmed by age. A neighbour who sat by the bed leaned over as Northmore entered and laid her hand upon the invalid's.

"I sent Bob for the preacher that came to see you one day, Mr. Ellis, and he's here. I thought you'd like to talk to him," she said.

The wild eyes turned to Northmore. "What do I want of him?"

“Why, you’re sick—and he’d been to see you—and I thought——”

“Then I’m going to die—at last!”

“I didn’t say that—but—perhaps he can cheer you up a little.”

“I don’t want the minister. I’ve had enough. What could he do for me now?”

Words seemed impossible to Northmore. “I hope that you will find peace,” he faltered. “Death loses its terrors——”

The gleaming eyes fastened upon him, while he felt himself shrivel under their uncanny gaze, as life flashed back into the pallid face.

“No, I want nothing of you. I know nothing of Christ. I’ve had my hell in this world—if there’s one to come, I’ll take it! Death has no terrors—it’s a blessing. Take your consolation to the man who robbed me of my life—who burned me with slow fire—he’ll want it, for he’s a Christian of Christians. He’s on the high road to Heaven with my ruin and my child on his soul. Don’t you think I want to go to hell—where he won’t be? Do you want to drag me into Heaven to see him rejoice through eternity, too? I’ve had enough of that here!”

He had risen in the bed and swayed with weakness while he screamed in his broken voice. Northmore sprang to his support, but was pushed away.

“Go and make Tom Morgan’s peace with God and let me alone. I never harmed a living thing. I never robbed a man of one cent. But I am lost! You come

to tell me that I haven't had hell enough here! I've had to see him prosper. My pretty girl was murdered—to make a princess of his. He builds churches—*churches!*—and God doesn't strike them by lightning! He prays in them—that robber—and talks to sinners! He has enough to eat—paid for with my money—*mine, mine, mine!* What do you think my wife and I have eaten this week? Hard bread and potatoes! Oh, don't talk of Morgan's God to me!”

“But, God is just; wait for——”

Ellis had fallen back with staring eyes. The terrified woman who had shrunk back at his raving, caught him in her arms as he gasped for breath. Northmore laid him gently back on his pillow and drew the sheet over the distorted face when he found that life had left.

He stayed at the house until he had done all that was possible for the bedridden wife in the next room, and went away to arrange for a decent burial, at which he would officiate. The frosty dawn was reddening over Blue Mountain as he walked down the spur, not quite steadily, and turned into a country road that led from the town. He must be alone in this rude awakening of his soul. Two hours later he stopped at a farmhouse, faint with exhaustion, and bought a cup of coffee. He found Mr. Garnett in great alarm, on the point of sending out a search for him, when he finally returned to the house.

CHAPTER IX

NORTHMORE never had any recollection of the physical history of the day which followed; he knew at night only that he was stunned by the shock of two vital forces whose unexpectedness had made the encounter doubly hard. He was a clear-headed fellow, whose merciless honesty of self-analysis left him small illusion, even in his enthusiasms. That a moral issue could entangle itself in the generous offer made so opportunely for his work was an undreamed-of possibility, but, while he reserved judgment until he had heard Mr. Morgan's side of the story, it was quite apparent that the moral issue involved would come within his jurisdiction, and he would have to define his position to himself. For the other thing he was totally unprepared. An unfortunate fancy of his boyhood had convinced him with the absoluteness of youth that he was quite through with Love and was wedded to his work. The revelation of the past week was enough to show him that he had never yet touched hands with Love; that he was upon the edge of a passion which would be the wreck of him if he could not break its spell at once. He knew perfectly the folly of it. He contrasted the rugged face which looked back from his mirror, with the brilliant girlish beauty of the one that haunted him; he measured her fortune beside his poverty; he thought of her free life against his self-immolation upon the altar of

obscurity. Because of these things, it had been easy to resolve that it should be an altar of celibacy as well. He smiled bitterly at his own presumption in daring to think of her. He had no mercy for men of his calling who exacted the sacrifice of their families to hardship. No! He was glad—and a bit proud of himself—that he could look his danger in the face; he would tear out every tendril of this new passion, summoning his manhood to the rescue, and his wild folly should never be suspected. With this stern resolve, he made a careful toilet and drove to Heathermuir with Silence Garnett, who chatted to him all the way over about the graces of Florida Morgan.

In sharpest contrast with the bareness of the house he had left at dawn, the luxury of the one he entered at dark appeared to smother him. It seemed impossible that starvation and overabundance should lie so close together without involving culpable stewardship of that surfeit of wealth, yet while he sat in judgment his heart plunged with gladness at the sight of the girl who came across the great drawing-room with eager hands extended in welcome. Northmore had never dreamed that any living woman could be so beautiful as she was then in the gauzy trailing gown, out of which her white shoulders and graceful head rose as from grey mist. He could guess that her few jewels were rare and costly.

“I knew you would bring her, my good Sir Knight,” she laughed, with her arms around Silence. “Do you know, dear, I have appropriated this man to be my

knight errant; he is already fighting my battles; he's going to be a scarred veteran, too, before many moons pass, because I've loaded up such heaps and heaps of windmills and other people for him to vanquish. Now, come and meet Olive."

Her friend was of a different type, tall, forceful, with little boast of beauty save that of good health and good humour. There was a sparkle of fun in her light eyes and the curve of her mouth. She was quite as unconventional as Florida, and the four were friends at once. By the time the other guests arrived the latter was already deep in her problem and would have told it to them but for the announcement of dinner.

As Northmore sat at the glittering table in the splendid dining-room an agonised shout rang in his ears so loud that he wondered others did not hear it. "*What do you think we've had to eat this week? Hard bread and potatoes!*" But Mr. Morgan was laughing at some bright saying of Olive Drysdale's, and the grave butler was serving Blue Points. The scene of the early morning persisted as the dinner progressed with oppressive lavishness, and the girl at his side found him an abstracted listener. Afterwards they all went to the music room where Florida unfolded the scheme in which she was so engrossed:

"Nobody's had time to tell me what he thinks of Miss Drysdale's suggestion of a big Thanksgiving dinner for the poor of Mogadonia—a sort of opening wedge to their hearts, you know. There isn't a bit of charity work done here, and someone must make a

beginning. Now, I want you all to discuss the plan. What do you think of it, Doctor?"

"It would be simply immense, that's the way it strikes me, if you could carry it out on a big scale. I've read of those things in cities."

"It's the same idea," explained Olive. "Some organization, usually the Salvation Army, gives huge Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners to the very poor, and I assure you they are notable events. It's the biggest and the most effective thing you could do at this time of year."

"Where would you serve it?" asked Doctor Tommy, who had never been able to establish a claim to the family name, so exclusively was it reserved for his father, the beloved "Old Doctor." He had been married but a month or so, and his bride declared that she didn't think she was entitled to it, either, so seldom was it accorded to her. She was listening with an interested face, and added:

"It would be a lovely thing to do—but where would you have it?"

"There, you've struck our weak point the first thing. Don't some of you know of a place in town that will be large enough and warm enough for the season? I don't know of one—and that is the drawback," confessed Florida.

"You know the opera house burned last winter," remarked the doctor's wife.

"Best thing it could have done," added her husband. "I suppose Joe Fury's hall wouldn't be big enough."

"No, indeed," objected Northmore; "and we don't want it, anyhow. There is a large warehouse near the railroad station that might do—if it could be got for the purpose."

"The very thing! Bless you, Mr. Northmore, for I should never have thought of that, and I'm sure it belongs to my father, too. It can be emptied if it is full of anything—and we will have it cleaned up and lighted and heated and decorated with bunting—oh, it is just the place. I've been quite worn out trying to get over that obstacle—the rest is so easy. Now we can go ahead with the details. Carrie, you and the doctor are going to be chief lieutenants, you know."

"Oh, are we in it?"

"Indeed you are! You are to put on aprons and cut and carve and wait on tables until the guests have had all they can eat; then if there's anything left you can sit down and have your own dinners."

"I like that—for our first Thanksgiving," grumbled the doctor facetiously.

"You'll enjoy it so much that you will never want to spend it any other way," returned Olive Drysdale. "I've had experience."

"Now that the most important point is settled, Florida," Mr. Morgan had risen and was standing behind his daughter's chair waiting for a pause, "I want to take your guests to my chrysanthemum house—I have had lights put there—and then I want them to see the Indian relics that have been dug out of the mound, before I send them to the Smithsonian. Come to the

greenhouse first, and you can take your time for the cabinets afterwards."

The display of chrysanthemums was surprisingly fine and the party lingered for some time, then scattered before the cabinets in the great library, and Mr. Morgan took the opportunity to lead Northmore to his den, which was so crowded with every grotesque article the furnisher could add to his bill that it was with difficulty that an uncomfortable carved chair could be extracted from the huddled furniture and placed where the visitor could face his host.

"I wanted to ask how you are progressing with the building proposition we talked of the other day," suggested Mr. Morgan.

Northmore searched the other's face with puzzled eyes. "I have talked with my working members individually, but the matter has not been presented officially."

"Well, I suppose that will be a mere form. Your congregation will hardly refuse such an offer."

"I should like a little longer to consider the question from all points with them." Northmore spoke dreamily; he was recalling certain expressions evoked by the mention of Morgan's proposition. "I reckon the Lord 'll be glad of any of that money that goes to do good," Squire Pocock had said. Mr. Garnett commented, "The Lord would probably be as well pleased with something better than cattle sheds for Morgan's workmen as with a house of worship." Mr. Money-penny smiled: "I guess it's true that Tom wants to

go to Congress." While the Old Doctor, wise and kindly, remarked: "I wish we might strike him for a hospital. There's not a bed in this town for the destitute sick or emergency cases."

Northmore stared at a fat black dragon over a cabinet, recalling these things; then an expectant movement attracted his eyes again to the gracious presence before him, this man of tender family ties and punctilious religious observance, against whom the town united in bitter denunciation.

"There seems to be a sentiment in favour of a widened influence in the town, among those who have expressed themselves. The institutional church is growing in favour as well as in usefulness. Does your offer admit of any latitude, Mr. Morgan? I think myself that the protection of the young people should be a principal consideration."

A hard smile widened Mr. Morgan's close mouth. "I see you haven't lived in Proctor Garnett's house all this time for nothing—but his opinions are not to be taken in this matter, for he's not a Christian, and his notions are all materialistic. I've no patience with innovations in the church; it's neither a shop nor a school, but as necessary a means to saving souls now as in the days of the apostles. Proctor Garnett would save them with a social club. What good are his model houses and his flower beds going to do anybody in the Day of Judgment, I would like to ask?"

"A man who helps another to better living, helps him spiritually; the motive of the Church to-day is higher

than Hell-phobia, Mr. Morgan. It must broaden to an infinity of means to meet the infinity of needs."

"I guess he's got you pretty firm. No, Mr. Northmore, my offer stands simply for an altar to the Most High—and nothing else."

"It is better to have a clear understanding," and the minister smiled away the irritation which Mr. Garnett's name always produced in Tom Morgan. In the brief silence which followed, Northmore took the opportunity to utter the thought that possessed his mind: "I want to call your attention to a case of destitution which is imperative—and which has a claim on you—as I understand the man once worked for you. I was called to a deathbed during the night, a pitiable case; the man has been sick for years. There is no money for his burial, and his wife is suffering for the necessities of life."

"Um-hm. You must appreciate that I am appealed to by the whole county."

"There is no question of the genuineness of this need. The name is Ellis, and they have lived here for many years."

Visible colour flowed over Mr. Morgan's face. His long upper lip bulged cruelly as he closed it upon the other before he spoke. "Ah, so Ellis is dead, is he? At last. Well, I certainly don't owe his family any help—but—you say she is actually suffering? Well, I suppose the poor fellow was really insane; that must have been the matter with him, and his wife wasn't responsible for that. He has treated me viciously for years—that man Ellis. He worked for me once, a long time ago,

and he was a fine workman, but I had a little outside transaction with him, for which he has libelled me ever since. He claimed I took advantage of him—he was unused to business—and he has spent the rest of his life in abuse of me. Of course he had sympathisers who took his statements for fact, and he has roused a good deal of prejudice against me. He wanted to raise a little money one time, and struck me for a loan on some very doubtful security, security that no one else would have touched. I didn't care to lend it—I was comparatively a poor man myself at the time, and he never could have paid it—but the man was working for me and I wanted to do him a favour if I could. I offered to buy his machine of him at a good price; it had never been tried, but I was willing to take the risk. He accepted my offer; I paid him the money on the spot and the transaction was ended—as I understood. I had the means of using the thing—which he never could have had, and the money to do it with—and it turned out well. When he learned this, he repented of his bargain, claimed that I had cheated him, and spread the report far and wide. It is easy to believe a slander against a successful man, and there were plenty to keep it going. Now, I hope I shall have peace. Is his wife living? Yes, I remember."

"She is barely alive, and in desperate want."

"I suppose it is my duty to forgive and forget. Some things are hard to forget, though."

"It would not be hard, Mr. Morgan, if you saw how she lives."

He made no reply as he opened a massive desk and wrote a cheque which he dried carefully before he handed it, open, to Northmore. It was for ten dollars. Then he talked of general subjects for a few minutes, as though to dissipate unpleasant memories, after which he led the way back to the drawing-room. They found the rest of the party grouped closely around Olive Drysdale, who was reading a girl's palm. The girl caught it away as the two men entered, and Olive was silent, with a look of annoyance.

"Let me hear my fortune over again," begged the doctor, extending his palm. "You told me so many nice things that I can't remember them all."

"Maybe she can't, either," insinuated Florida laughingly.

"I'd be afraid to try—but you haven't a bad line in your hand."

"Now, you hear that, Mr. Northmore. Why don't you try your fate? She's a regular wizard."

The minister involuntarily put his hand behind him. "I never had my fate told in my life," he said.

"Then you must certainly hear it," urged Florida. "Olive only tells good fortune—and, of course, nobody believes it anyhow. Just for fun—let us hear what she will tell you, Mr. Northmore. We all know that it's nonsense."

Northmore flushed with a reserved man's dread of self-revelation, but would not refuse longer.

"He actually believes it," laughed Olive as she glanced up at him before she bent over his reluctantly

extended palm. There was a moment of interested silence as she pondered, each one listening with the fascination which the foretelling of destiny compels even from the sceptical.

"You must be finding strange things," commented Doctor Tommy as Olive studied the hand like a page. She looked up doubtfully.

"Yes, I am—rather. You have some pretty striking characteristics, Mr. Northmore; may I tell them?"

"Yes, though. I don't believe in it, you know."

"Oh, I have little reservations, sometimes, if it is too bad. Your hand shows tremendous will power, controlled about equally by impulse and judgment. Did you ever hear of such a combination? It has led you through tortuous paths. Fate meant to do well by you in the first place, but you thwarted her and went off into a side track which led through great obstacles, some of which you have overcome."

"*Some of which?*"

"Yes, if I guess your age correctly, there are changes of fortune still before you. Your strong motor combination—will, reason, impulse—sweeps you on regardless of expediency whenever you think you are in the right. Therefore, your changes of fortune are generally misfortune."

"You are discouraging," and Northmore tried not to be serious.

"I am paying you off for not believing in me."

The doctor's wife bent nearer. "You are leaving out the most interesting part. How long is he going to

live, and how many times is he going to be married?" she asked.

"He has a long life, with no serious illness indicated. The only one is at about forty-five, but it will not be fatal. The other question—shall I answer that?"

"Certainly; why not?"

"You will love—or you have loved—but once, but it is with your whole heart—your life. It is tremendous. I have never seen anything like it. There is trouble in it, too, if not tragedy. You take life very seriously in all respects. You have a great love of truth and openness. You have little imagination, are literal, exact, and have not a great sense of humour."

"Great Scott, Miss Drysdale, aren't you piling it on pretty heavy? You gave all the rest of us good fortunes. What's your grudge against him?" exclaimed a young man who had watched Northmore's face with keen eyes. "Give him riches, honour, or a happy marriage, one. You don't say how his love affair turns out."

"Do you want to know?" and Olive looked straight into his eyes. "Of course, we don't believe in it."

"You needn't tell—any of those three things. No, I don't believe in it, though you have made some very shrewd guesses. Is that all?"

"I will tell you a little more. You are going to make friends, not many, but loyal ones, who will stand by you in your reverses, and the latter half of your life will be full of confidence of people—of honour without wealth. You are a leader born; you are daring and

convincing—but you are too impolitic to use your influence to your own advantage.”

Northmore withdrew his hand, laughing: “Surely you cannot be accused of lack of imagination, Miss Drysdale. Isn’t someone else going to be exposed for my benefit?”

“We’ve all been through it except Florida. Let us hear your fortune. The rest of us have contributed to your entertainment,” begged Mrs. Doctor Tommy.

“No,” and Florida closed her hand in her lap. “I let a woman once tell my fortune with a crystal ball. She gave a séance at the hotel in Paris where we were staying, and she told me such dreadful things, and made me believe her so—that I will never run the risk again. I can’t throw off the influence.”

“I’m sure it’s not true, but she won’t even let me look in her hand,” complained Olive. Florida smiled and shook her head. Then she moved to Northmore’s side. “Don’t think I am too silly—minding such things. You take them so coolly. Now, tell me when you are coming out to make plans for our dinner. I am a good follower—and we have just heard that you are a leader.”

“Whenever you wish;” he avoided her gaze. Her smile twinkled in the corners of her eyes in irresistible lines, while her feminine humility before his mental virility—the perfect correlative of his manliness—swept down all barriers between them.

“Then we must begin at once, for the time is short—and you will keep me from failing this time, won’t you?”

If you can only coax the people to come, I will answer for their staying when they do get there. Can you come out Monday afternoon? That will give us time to talk over things with Olive and make our plans carefully. Then it will be easy to work out details as we come to them. Oh, it *must* succeed this time!"

He promised to come on Monday afternoon, and she suggested some things that he was to think over in the meantime, to which he paid little attention, listening helplessly to her voice, and looking deep into her beautiful eyes. He drove home, every nerve thrilling with the memory of her, every word and glance of hers present with him while he was vowing to himself that he would go fearlessly to her whenever it was necessary, and that he *would not* love her. He was not coward enough to flee from temptation, even if he could give a plausible reason for so doing. He was man enough to conquer this madness even as he had vanquished other things in the past.

CHAPTER X

NORTHMORE found himself as much at ease in the happy-go-lucky life of Mrs. Jernigan's household as in the preciseness of the Garnett home. Two upstairs rooms had been made into one for him, and fitted with shelving for his books. He was glad that the only other boarder was the young druggist, Harrington, whom he had met on the day of his arrival, for he had found no other young man in the town with whom he could have the slightest companionship.

Mrs. Jernigan had a husband, but he was afflicted with chronic weariness which made an arduous task of his life mission, that of establishing, by force of argument, a conclusion to any question incapable of proof. To this occupation he had devoted the past fourteen summers and winters in exhaustive wrestling with Uncle Jimmy Potter on the elusive relation of Predestination to Free Will, a question which the untimely death of Uncle Jimmy, in his eighty-eighth year, had left forever without a conclusion, since, as Mr. Jernigan lamented, the increasing heedlessness of the age left these tremendous issues stranded, as it were, high and dry on the sandy shore of oblivion. As he depended wholly upon original sources for argumentative weapons, he was obliged to ruminate industriously in his arm chair, in chimney corner or front porch as the

season required, that his steel might be ready and bright for use whenever he could find metal upon which to try it.

Upon Mrs. Jernigan, therefore, devolved the less important tasks of supplying the family needs and tugging their two children through the public school. Ben was a handsome fellow with manly eyes, but poor Genevieve Pearl, her mother's pride, was so densely freckled that her normal complexion would never be known. She had a mop of rich red hair, and was clever at mathematics.

The whole family took charge of the minister and his impedimenta on the night of their arrival, and helped to fit the latter into their proper nooks. Mr. Jernigan climbed the stairs to contribute his presence and the even grind of his conversation to the general good, sitting in an "old gold" plush rocker filched from the parlour to ornament the new study. Mr. Harrington arranged on their shelves books from boxes which Northmore opened. Genevieve Pearl wiped pictures as they were unpacked by Ben—and took great interest in the class photographs—while Mrs. Jernigan looped up clean curtains. The doorbell jingled and Ben ran down to return with a basket of apples for Northmore.

"Them's Daddy Pocock's Maiden's Blush," commented his mother positively.

"Yes, he said he wouldn't come up because it was his bed time. He'll be round to-morrow."

"He was here this afternoon," and Mrs. Jernigan stepped down from her chair and reached for a tack

hammer. "Now, what you s'pose he wants to know, Mr. Northmore?"

"I never could guess a conundrum in my life," and the minister pried the last board from the top of a box.

"Well, he wanted to know if I thought it was safe fur him to rent the parsonage. He asked how long you'd taken these rooms fur, an' I told him you was built in like you meant to stay. He said, well, there was no tellin'. You couldn't count on a young man—an' you'd been seen out walkin' twice with Silence Garnett—an' stayin' all the fall up at her very house—he 'lowed you mightn't be a single man very long."

Northmore looked annoyed and jerked out a packet of manuscript: "I hope you set his mind at rest," he remarked shortly.

"No, I couldn't. I told him that Silence Garnett was the prettiest and sweetest girl in town, and that if you could see her every day an' not try to cut out that fire-eatin' missionary that's worryin' the life out of her, you wasn't a human man. An' I told him that if it was to be Silence I'd let you go with all my heart and jine these rooms up agin fur some other boarder, I'd be so happy to have her took out of danger."

"I don't think there's any chance for anyone else while Mr. Firestone is in the field," he said seriously. Harrington dropped the dictionary he was lifting and it crashed, open, upon a little water colour which Genevieve had laid down, and broke the glass. The young man picked it up, his face painfully flushed, and Northmore hastened to assure him that the damage was in-

consequent. He put the book in its place while Mrs. Jernigan turned and said, to him only :

“ I wasn’t sure before, but I know now,” and louder, “ If anybody else but Billy Canter cares for that girl, I don’t see why he don’t——”

“ Yes, why doesn’t he? ” echoed Harrington bitterly. “ If you try hard I think you can find a reason or two yourself, Mrs. Jernigan. I’m sorry for poor Billy Canter.”

“ Don’t you worry! Billy Canter’s been in love with every girl in town these last twenty years—he’s in love with ’em all yet—but the trouble is, there’s so many and he loves ’em all so much that some other fellow always gets ahead of Billy—and breaks his heart. I’ve comforted him ’leven or twelve times, myself. But it’s dangerous now, and Silence’s mother’s no good at all where religion’s concerned.”

“ I’ll have to go to the store now,” remarked Harrington nervously. “ I’m sorry—but—good-night.”

Mrs. Jernigan looked after him with motherly concern. The monotonous note of her husband’s occupation had made an accompaniment for this bit of side talk. Northmore was too near to escape listening to it:

“ —He depended a wonderful sight on authority, Mr. Martin always did. I argued with him that authority was as likely to be wrong as right. ‘ Now, f’r instance,’ says I, ‘ take the personal devil. What’s the need of authority on a question like that, that a man can argue out for himself. Now, the evidences of a personal

devil,' says I, 'are so plain that to a man that can argue there ain't an agument on the other side, not one. How are you ever goin' to punish the wicked if there ain't a place to put 'em in? An' how are you goin' to run a place to put 'em in without a ruler of that place?' An' there I had him. Good man, too, Mr. Martin was, but mighty weak in argument. Now, there was another ques——"

"Move over, pa, an' let Mr. Northmore drive the nail fur that looking glass. Too bad we scared out poor Mr. Harrington. I thought he was tender there, an' I wanted him to know that he'd better hustle if he's got his eye on Silence—or you either, Mr. Northmore. Makes no difference—so's it ain't Africa."

"—question that I argued with Mr. Mar——"

"You can't set there either, pa, for I've got to put the table——"

"—tin and I got the best of——"

"Nor in the door, either, for I've got to go back and forth."

"—him in that, too. He had a no——"

"You'll blister that cheer settin' so clost to the fire——"

"—tion that the Atone——"

"Your rockers is scrapin' the lounge, there."

"—ment was a—was a—now, Susan, don't chase me out of the winder. Mr. Northmore can't get no sense of what I'm sayin' if you keep me hoppin' round like I was on a hot griddle."

"Well, he'll have to wait then, fur I'm through an'

I'm goin' to chase you down stairs now, an' leave him to himself. Ben, you pack down them boxes an' clear up the litter the best you can. I'll sweep in the mornin'."

Northmore found a safe and practical adviser in many instances in his large-hearted landlady, whose capabilities quite obliterated any slight deficiencies in her house-keeping. She was an excellent cook and her house was scrupulously clean if never quite in order. A rumor that Priscilla Munson had had a spell would send her off before the dishes she was washing were put away, or Tilly Hopper's baby would get a button in its throat while she was cleaning the stairs and she would run to its assistance, leaving the pan of soapsuds on the second step in the shadow. But Northmore learned to be wary after he had stepped into it once, and to look for a kitten or blacking brush in his chair at table after he had once sat down on these misplaced articles. When he had at length persuaded his hostess to return her cherished plush rocker to the parlour and let him buy a light one for his own use, he was entirely comfortable. He found time in the lengthening evenings, before his cheery grate fire, to carry on the course in mythology, which he had begun at Mr. Garnett's, but much of his daylight time was given to the all-important Thanksgiving dinner for the poor of the town, which was coming on with wonderful preparation. Florida could think and talk of little else, and spared neither effort nor expense to make it successful. Northmore, in his great dread of disappointment for her, was making a house-

to-house canvass with personal invitations and explanations. He discovered during this canvass that he was known and treated with deep respect by all the native population of the Island quarter for his interest in Mrs. Ellis and his officiating at her husband's funeral, which had been so largely attended that the coffin had been carried into the yard that all might hear him—from whence the crowd overflowed into the road. Since that day scarcely a blackened miner or overalled working man passed him without a respectful lifting of the hat. He was taking the utmost advantage of this popularity to secure a good attendance at the great event.

Meanwhile his presence was required daily at a committee meeting, and he often had some function to perform in the work itself. Miss Drysdale proved to be a manager of experience and ability, and Florida's anticipations rose enthusiastically as the day drew near and one stage of accomplishment after another was passed. It had proved that the warehouse was full of wheat—but that was no obstacle to her. It was soon emptied, wired for electric lighting—in lieu of sufficient windows—piped for steam heating from an adjacent stave factory—thoroughly cleaned and its brown interior walls covered with white bunting, of which a false ceiling was also made and prettily decorated in the national colours.

“So many of them will be foreigners, you know, and it will be a pleasant association of the flag,” she said.

“That's a bright idea,” endorsed Northmore. It was the last afternoon, and the committee were inspecting to see that everything was ready for the next day.

Florida was flushed, eager, tired, a little dishevelled—enough to be lovelier than ever—and confident of success. It did not occur to her that her own complete preparation was not the only factor of success, and Northmore knew that she had unconsciously laid the burden of securing guests upon him—and with implicit confidence. No doubt of that feature of the occasion appeared to enter her mind—and he grew sick with apprehension when he saw the extent of her expectation. He stood, hammer in hand, looking about to see that the mottoes were all straight, and Florida, a tangle of red, white, and blue ribbons over her arm, had come down the long floor to join him. Doctor Tommy and Carrie were inspecting tall stacks of plates upon white-covered side tables of planking.

“Will it all do?” she smiled.

“Do!” He fairly groaned. “It is too beautiful. It is so fine that—I—that—it’s going to cost immensely.”

“Is that all you were going to say? I hope it will. I want it to be as fine and dainty and good as if the best people in the country—I mean the richest—were going to come. And we have done the best we could with the place.”

Olive Drysdale crossed from the open door to know if another load of chrysanthemums could be used.

“Yes, indeed, if there’s another load left in the greenhouse. But what can we put them in? Everything is full now.”

“I’ll drive over for my umbrella stand,” volunteered Doctor Tommy. “And I’ll gather up the rest on my

street. You might put a few more bunches on those long tables while I'm gone. You can't get them overdone."

"I do wonder if we'll have room for everybody," pondered Florida with anxious eyes.

"How many do you think you have prepared for?" asked Northmore.

"Six hundred. Doctor Tommy says he heard people five miles the other side of Bellevue talking about it yesterday."

"Are they coming?" Northmore faced him suddenly.

"I—why, I think so. They were full of questions about it. The whole county is talking about it."

"Oh, dear, what shall we do if things give out? We can seat each table three times if the food holds out. I hope the caterer is prepared for that. Oh, if anybody goes away without a good dinner—all that he can eat, I should never forgive myself. I feel it so—when I drive by the poor little houses and see wornout women and little children that are cold—and then go home where there is too much of everything! I wake up in the night when the wind sings around the house—oh, for once in their lives everybody in the county who comes shall have a good dinner."

"He certainly will. Why, Floss, you've got a government contract out there. I've seen a few such things, too."

"But think how many there'll be! There are all those glassworkers in Bellevue and Mogadonia—I

hadn't counted them in—and there'll be three or four hundred of them alone—and their families. Then there are hundreds of colliers scattered all through these hills—and every quarryman will come because father owns the quarries—and the Smelt Furnace down at Mosely's Junction—only think of it! There will be at least a thousand—and we've only given the order for six hundred. Then there'll be some farmers and lumbermen—why, what in the world shall we do? ”

She turned to the others in consternation.

“ Don't worry, dearie. If we run out we'll just call on the town people to give us their dinners and eat bread and butter themselves. They'd all do it. Don't you worry,” comforted Olive.

“ Indeed, they would—and come and help us besides,” added Mrs. Tommy, wiping her grimy hands on an over-worked towel—for she had been making evergreen letters. “ And isn't it the prettiest place you ever saw! What a surprise it will be as they all come in! No one would dream of such a transformation.”

They all turned to take in the completed effect with critical eye; the long high room gave a surprising effect of purity as well as beauty—in its elaborate decorations. Six long immaculately white tables, each laid for sixty people, stretched down the main floor, while smaller tables were placed in corners ready for use when the others should be filled. There were chrysanthemums and carnations in lavish abundance wherever they could be bestowed, adding their splendor to the general effect.

“ Now, is everything ready? ” asked Florida. “ Be-

cause, you know, we shall have to seat people over and over at the tables, and we mustn't leave one thing to be thought of after the rush begins."

"That's right," endorsed Olive Drysdale. "They come in swarms—they have one advantage that you can count upon, they will absorb a big dinner with record speed. You can count on their places quicker than you could imagine without experience. But let us make sure; let us each go over our particular department and see that everything is ready."

They carefully went the rounds and found nothing wanting. By the time they met again a footman stood inside the door to announce that the carriage had come for the two girls, and Northmore held their long auto coats for them, and then went out to hand them in. The soft sad gloom of the November evening fell as a curtain, and he stood to watch the carriage roll out of sight, lifting his hat unconsciously to it, as in a reverence that could find no other expression—and with a heartfelt, desperate prayer that that gentle heart might be spared the stab of disappointment on the next day. Yet he lay anxious through sleepless hours, counting again and again that elusive sum, the number of people who are dependable in any event. And the number rose and fell as he counted it from every source of his reliance.

Thanksgiving Day dawned cold, with whirls of wind and stinging sleet and a low firmament of slaty cloud. Towards noon a cold wave blew out of the northwest and froze the sleet, which stopped falling. Northmore

was early at the warehouse with a sullen foreboding weighing at his heart which he could not dispel, even when the Heathermuir carriage arrived and Florida came in with a radiant face and the daintiest of white dresses. The perfection of readiness and the savory fragrance which already filled the town were to her a realisation of success. Each attendant came in with an exclamation of wonder at the finished effect, even those who had helped to make it. The largest bakeries had been chartered for the day, and were already sending out tantalising odours of roasting turkey, escalloped oysters, mince pie, and plum pudding. Soon the aroma of good coffee penetrated to every street with its cordial invitation. Florida was now in such a flutter of tremulous expectation that she could do nothing but hover about the tables and glance at the door. Her eyes were feverishly brilliant, while Northmore's heart was pounding in an agony of suspense out of all proportion to the importance of the occasion—but not to the passion that possessed him. At a quarter to twelve it had grown so intense that he, too, could do nothing but watch the door. At twelve it flew open and seven schoolboys pushed one another in. Florida flew to meet them.

“There, they're coming now! I do hope that we have enough!” she cried joyously to Northmore, as she passed him.

“Surely!” He went to glance down the street. The pleasant Irish woman who had been Florida's friend ever since the Children's Day at Heathermuir was com-

ing with her family and a neighbour's, eleven in all. Next arrived a delegation from Shantytown, women with little shawls on their heads and men with funny little hats and hobnailed shoes. They hovered doubtfully in a corner, awed and suspicious of such splendour of table linen and forks, and had to be persuaded in pantomime to seat themselves. Then three town bums slouched in and threw their hats under the table, sitting on the side of their chairs and despatching this unusual liberality of free lunch with the providence of a squirrel laying in a winter supply. Two coloured men came next, followed by five of the muddy, nameless nondescripts who are a part of the equipment of the railroad station of a country town, and who appear to exist upon the fascination of the trains they never take. After this there was a lull. It was twenty minutes to one, and less than forty persons were seated at one of the long tables.

"I'm glad they came early, so that we can set the table again—for the rush," whispered Florida when Northmore had lifted his voice in an unsteady invocation. He had reached the stage when his ancestral instincts would have delighted in going out with a shotgun for delinquents who had scorned this feast—and its dear hostess. Could anyone who had looked into those tender, eager eyes ever do an unkind thing again, he wondered. She was lifting them to him now:

"There's someone trying to open the door. Go quick and let him in!"

Three well-dressed little girls were trying to peep through the glass panel that had been put in.

"Come in, dearies. Were you afraid?" she asked in a tone that must have drawn the stones from the street, thought the man beside her. The first one shrank back and ducked her head.

"No, ma'am, we dassent. We went to get the mail at the post office and we—just wanted to peep in and see what it looked like."

"Go all round and look at everything. Can't you really have your dinners here? I would love to have you."

"No, ma'am, our mothers wouldn't know where we are."

"Couldn't you go and ask them if you might come, just for fun, you know? You might ask some little children that you know of who—who haven't any Thanksgiving dinner—whose mothers were too busy, you know. Couldn't you think of someone? We'd love to have them—and their mothers and fathers. They don't know that, do they?"

The little girls appeared to think not, and Northmore turned savagely to her.

"People don't seem to understand! And they aren't worth the trouble—if—if they would do such a thing."

The little girls tiptoed around the tables, accepted all the fruit and candy they could carry away, and went home. Another bunch of schoolboys peeped in, giggled, and stumped their leader to take a seat, following him. A small battalion of town loafers slunk in, having already absorbed celebration of the day to the limit of their credit and reliability of legs. These were fol-

lowed by about twenty of the people who were pledged to Northmore to come. He sent a boy with a note to Mrs. Jernigan in hot haste. The first table had not yet been filled, as its guests had come scatteringly enough to succeed each other. The other tables stretched in long, glittering emptiness, their volunteer attendants standing in white-aproned rows against the walls, whispering conjectures that were needlepoints to Northmore's sensitive consciousness. The orchestra discoursed popular selections, and the few guests were stuffed till they begged surcease of hospitality.

A portly figure entered with a blast of cold air, and Florida flew to greet him. It was the Old Doctor, escorting a pathetic young woman in a light crochet shawl, leading two purple-cold children in scant attire.

"I don't know why you should be surprised to see me," he began with gruff tenderness to her. "Carrie wanted to put me off with a promise of turkey on Sunday and a cold lunch to-day, but—my gracious, when the whole town smells of this dinner I'm not going to eat cold lunch! I like good dinners too well to miss a thing like this. I wanted some good company, so I stepped over and asked Mrs. Hadder if she'd come with an old fellow—and she was very nice about it. These women never cook a meal unless there's a man in the house. Now, Laura, we want to sit where they won't slight us. You take the baby and I'll look out for the little man."

Not less than ten attendants sprang to wait on the Old Doctor, but he chose Florida herself, stopping to

pat her shoulders and say: "You're going to spoil us in this town so bad that we'll never get back to our fodder. But it's a grand thing to do, honey, and it's bound to set us a pace. Now, I'm too weak to speak again till I've had some of those things that smell so good."

Which was literally true of his companion. The poor girl was a deserted wife whose destitution was tragic. She had hardly been helped when Mrs. Jernigan came in like a burst of sunshine, with a little party in tow. Her voice rang out cheerily:

"I told Mis' Buckley here that I thought Florida Morgan'd like to have some of us quality fur comp'ny to dinner, an' I dared her to come. I put away my turkey fur Sunday, because Florida's got both of my young men down here an' I hadn't nobody to cook fur, as you might say, an' I tole Mis' Buckley to keep her'n same way and we'd have two Thanksgivin's. I 'lowed to her it would be right nice to eat one dinner we didn't cook fur ourselves. How-d'ye-do, Florida? What a lovely young lady you've growed up to be! Miss Morgan, let me make you acquainted with my friend Mis' Buckley an' her two daughters an' her little boys an' with Mr. Jernigan an' my son an' daughter."

"Oh, you dear!" whispered Florida irrelevantly, clasping the two red hands in her white ones: "You dear! I shall always love you for doing it. *They're famished.*" For this family was one of the town mysteries. Nobody knew how they lived, and all the members were of the transparent delicacy produced by semi-starvation. Florida could hardly permit the eager

waiters to serve them. She hovered around, passing them everything in sight over and over again.

A few bashful young farmers came in for the lark, some glassworks people, not blowers who receive high wages, but labourers, and an occasional straggler until three o'clock, when it was evident that "the rush" was over. But one table had been used. Then the committee ate their own dinner, Florida opposite Northmore, with a white face, before an untouched plate. He noticed that she ate nothing but a few Malaga grapes. Later in the evening, when the assistants of the day had gone, Mrs. Jernigan bustled up to her:

"Now, Florida if you're short of help clearin' up, Mis' Buckley an me'll delight to pitch in an' help a while fur some o' these good pervisions that you've got left. They mustn't be wasted—an' it'll save us cookin'."

"You shan't do a thing, you dear. You're my guest for the day—and I'll send a waggon round with something that will give you both a rest from cooking. You were so good to joke and help entertain the people, and everybody loves you so. You and the doctor saved the day for me."

"All right, if you're so easy as that, I reckon it's not our lookout, Mis' Buckley, is it? And we've had the time of our lives."

"Well!" and the Old Doctor crowded nearer. "Why don't I come in on that? Laura Hadder and I don't like to cook any better than other folks. I could carry a good big basket—far's her house, anyway." A hint

which was quickly taken. The basket he carried was really a load for him. They watched his wide form piloting his little party through the door, then Florida, Silence, Olive, and the two young men gathered near one of the heaters in the deepening gloom. Silence was putting on her wraps to go home, and Harrington was waiting to go with her. Nobody could find a topic that would break the painful quiet. Someone came in.

"It's the Old Doctor. He forgot something," announced Florida, making out the round figure.

"No, I didn't, honey. I came back to tell you what a field you've planted this cold day. It's all underground, but don't mind that, my child. That's the place to plant seed—but you must cultivate it right. And now, to the present question; what are you going to do with all this car load of delicious food?"

"That's what we can't imagine. Of course we must give it to the poor—but how? How can we distribute such a quantity in the short time we have?"

"Give it!—nonsense! Don't you give away a pound of it! I'm an old man and I know this town like a book. They don't deserve it, either, though that's not the question. I've got the right scheme, if you'll only agree to it. You must sell that stuff."

"Sell it! But we can't. Who would buy it?"

"The people who need it most. It would get to the right places fast enough."

"But, how can we advertise it? The papers won't come out till Saturday. How can we reach people?"

"Easiest thing about it. Tell one woman—tell Susan—and one small boy. You see, I know."

"And—who—who will see to it?"

"Set the dominie and Harrington and my boy Tommy at it. They'll be good shopkeepers. Put up a placard on the door before you leave now. And let me help you with prices. It must be a bargain sale, you know, but not too cheap. Now, run along, Silence, or you'll take cold staying in here with that big coat on. I tell you, dominie, I'm proud when these babies of mine grow up and do things in the world."

"Oh, doctor, you are the dearest darling old comforter! I wonder if they really will buy this stuff. When I think of that I begin to know what an awful failure it was."

"Wait and see," whispered Northmore. "It's a great beginning. The doctor is right, and I've got an idea out of it."

They sat down at a small table to arrange a method for the sale and to write the placard, and Florida watched them in silence. Suddenly she sprang to her feet, ran to the partitioned-off pantry, dropped into a wooden chair, and burst into heartbreaking sobs. After a time Northmore followed her and in a moment the doctor followed him.

"They were a little afraid of you, honey, that's all," said the Old Doctor, coming upon Northmore's helpless figure standing beside the girl.

"Afraid of—*me*?" The exquisite tremolo of grieved wonder was more than the young man could

bear. He went away and left her with the doctor. "It's your—your money and your education and your travel—and your beauty," the doctor said. "There's too much difference."

"Oh, but there isn't. I was homesick for the place, and all of them. The first person we met upon the platform when we came home from abroad was dear old Daddy Pocock. I think he had never spoken to me before, but he shook my hand and said, 'Why, Sissy Morgan, how you've growed up!' and I believe I hugged him."

The bargain sale opened briskly the next morning, so briskly indeed that the town marshal had to be called early to keep the people in orderly procession at the entrance. The women of Whisky Island, the farthest part of the town, were waiting in a crowd when the door was opened at eight o'clock. They carried large baskets and were voluble in many languages. The wives of quarrymen and furnacemen and colliers and lumbermen and glassworkers were all there with plenty of money for their purchases, driving sharp bargains for the food they had been invited to eat free. Others were there whom the Old Doctor rejoiced to see, the half-fed respectable who manage to live upon an income of nothing at all and who are really the keenest sufferers, mentally and physically, in any community. These came in heartbreaking makeshifts of clothing, with hungry eyes and transparent little lies to one another about the convenience of buying something when one was so busy!

Nothing surprised Northmore so much as the paradoxical haggling over the nominal prices of things which the buyers had refused as a gift. The price of a roast turkey was forty cents—twenty cents for a half, but when the big ones were gone the buyers demanded a reduction to thirty-five for the smaller ones. Cranberry sauce brought six cents a quart; Mocha and Java coffee, ten cents a pound; bread, two cents a loaf; plum-pudding, ten cents a pound, and ice cream, fifteen cents a brick. Oysters, cream, celery, butter, sweet potatoes, cake, candy, pies, fruit, nuts, all went as fast as they could be handled. The crowd was so dense and so clamorous that it hindered the selling, and it was long past noon when the supply was at last exhausted. As the last one turned away, and Northmore locked the door, the Old Doctor came up beaming with satisfaction:

“Now, it’s come out right after all. The people you invited to that dinner have got it—and not in charity. I tell you, the problem of this world is not how to give alms, but how to put the good things where the poor can buy them.”

Northmore smiled bitterly, thinking of the girl who was grieved to the heart: “I suppose they will warm up that banquet on their own tables, and it will have the flavour of independence with the aromatic sauce of a baragin!”

“Exactly,” said the Old Doctor.

CHAPTER XI

NORTHMORE's horse rustled knee-deep through glossy brown leaves thick with the long ripening of the autumn just past; his reins lay slack in his hand; his eyes were soft with feeling, for every sense thrilled to the requiem of the Indian summer day with which the forest colonnades were vibrant. He loved this mood of the repentant December afternoon that filched from June a holiday whose glow turned purple and umber to topaz and dust of gold. In its harmonies were voices which stilled the depths of the man's troubled soul with the first peace it had known for weeks.

So softly he drove on the hidden trail that creatures of the woods feared him no more than a rustling breeze. More than once a covey of timid quail ran across the road before him and hid their speckled bodies in pawpaw thickets, while fat squirrels with winter stores in their pouched cheeks scurried up rough trees in whose bare branches crows were noisily quarrelling. The slow pace carried him at last to the top of the hill, where he stopped to gaze lovingly over the panorama of billowing valley and range that he never passed in haste. A familiar figure standing with bared head in the sunlight of the lonely spot, caught his eye, and at sound of hoofs upon the windswept summit the pleasant pink face turned to him, alight with greeting.

"What are you doing up here, Mr. Garnett?" asked Northmore, leaning out to speak to him.

"I'm—well, since you ask, I think I must have been worshipping."

"I didn't mean that, of course. I wanted to know if you were here without a buggy so that I might have your company home."

"Yes, indeed, you may. I was waiting for the narrow-gauge train to take me home all the way round by Mosely's—with an hour yet to wait for it. But I wouldn't mind that—up here in these woods. I guess I'm a sort of pantheist. I do literally worship here—and I sometimes think"—his face lighted with solemn joy—"that I've been in the Eternal presence. I have almost talked with God."

"I understand perfectly. I come to the hills myself for help when I'm overwhelmed."

"It's the only place where a man can see himself clearly. I tell you, Mr. Northmore, the old heathen got a good deal nearer to God than we admit. Their vocabulary was so primitive that the antiquarians never got at the soul of their beliefs."

"I am just reaching that conclusion myself; you know I am deep in myth study—began it at your house—and I find it illuminating. As you say, we never get the hyponoia of myths—their inner meaning. I can read into most of them a crude conception of God."

"In the Aryan myths?"

"Yes, though it is clearer in the Semitic myths. Their monotheism is absolute. The Aryan myths are

poetic and diffused; they are full of demi-gods, but behind all the beautiful imagery is the conception of Deity, absolute and omnipotent."

"Aren't you afraid, Mr. Northmore?"

"Of what?"

"Of probing too far."

"What is the danger?"

"Of running down your own doctrines in some pagan myth."

Northmore flushed consciously and Mr. Garnett hastened to add, "You're doing such good work that I should hate to see you run on a sharp rock."

"What I have thus far found is to the contrary effect. That the pagans found God in natural phenomena before the day of Revelation is the tremendous proof. It is like the appearance of the eye in animal life to mark the first flood of light in primeval darkness. The first response to Deity is marked by savage myth."

"There's no danger that you will get away from Deity anywhere in anthropology; it is in history itself, the mass of what is called 'superstition' in early times and 'bigotry' in modern, that will trip you up. Bigotry has been the ball and chain upon moral progress since the world began. It is the ball and chain upon the foot of the Church right now—when every force of the age is calling for freedom of thought. But it is necessary for you to keep within your bounds if you are to continue the splendid work you have begun—and if you don't stop right where you are, you will run upon big-

otry so near home it will paralyse you. Forewarned is forearmed, you know."

The young man bristled: "Don't you think the true and false are as readily separated now as in the past?"

"More so. That is exactly your danger. You will undermine your own foundations."

"If they're so slight that the reading of open history will cave them in, the sooner I am exposed the better. I hope I know the difference between truth and bigotry."

"The very rock I struck. Therefore I give warning."

"Just what is your definition of bigotry, Mr. Garnett?"

"The adherence to ancient theology by leaders who would not tolerate antique methods in any exact science. As well go back to Galileo for our astronomy or Esculapius for our medicine."

"The great religious reformers stood on mountain peaks above the bigotry of their day."

"So they did, Mr. Northmore, and all honour to them forever—but their mountains are submerged till they are hardly islands now. Why should we use antiquated and imperfect standards for so important a function as morality, when every force of the time calls for progressive new standards to keep pace with the rush of the world in all other ways? John Calvin was a torch bearer for his time, but his followers in their turn clung to his rule and heaped ignominy upon a far greater man who rose to deliver them a century later. Voltaire was reviled by the bigotry of the very sects for whom

he gave his talent, his long life, and his fortune, to prevent their utter extermination. That is one instance. Religion does not suffer, but, unfortunately, it is the effete theology of a past age that you in the pulpit have to preach. That must soon go. You will discover that we need what Voltaire's age needed—a sloughing off of ancient creeds, a crystallisation of truth—a *church to God*, as he built one. The moral need of to-day is a new statement of religious tenets.”

“Ah!” said Northmore, with his long breath, “then you are advising me to pilot my people through a channel which I dare not chart for myself.”

“Not quite. You may avoid the rocks of ages, but you can't blast them out. You can break yourself on them and ruin your chance of usefulness, but your people wouldn't tolerate any radical advance and you couldn't outgrow your church. So, steer around the rocks.”

“At the cost of sincerity?”

Mr. Garnett laughed: “Well, that's a question. You are sincere now; keep so by staying where you are.”

They had reached the shoulder of Old Whiteface and the horse stopped for his customary rest after the climb. The warm red of a winter sunset glowed behind the hills which rose in great scallops against it, fringed with bare forests, delicate as filaments of seaweed. Both men looked down upon the town in the hollow spanned by the filigree of high trestles between the hills, and Mr. Garnett pointed to his pottery:

“Now, what a fool I was to wander off on the inde-

terminate subject of theology when there's one at my heart that I really wanted to talk to you about! The new plans have come and I want you to see them—for my pet building, you know. I think they're pretty nearly what we wanted. There's no reason why we can't begin upon them next spring—and I'm impatient to get to work."

"So soon as that?" Northmore roused from his abstraction, glowing with interest. "I hope so. Call upon me whenever you like."

"Oh, I'm going to do that. The plan is largely yours as it stands now, and the most important thing of all, the management, is in your hands. I shall feel that I haven't lived in vain if I can see that building completed and in running order. You will have to watch it closely for the first five years. Everything depends upon the start. Can't you drive round to the works now and glance at the plans?"

Northmore did so, for he was anxious to see them. The men were just leaving for the night, and he noticed the friendliness with which they welcomed back their employer after his week of absence. Mr. Garnett took him up to a small private room which he had never seen before, a sanctum adjoining the office. He glanced in wonder over the shelves of dignified volumes.

"What a tremendous reader you are, Mr. Garnett! I don't wonder that you have broken the traces; you have run the whole course. From Kant to Hegel is a long leap; Fichte, Descartes, Schopenhauer—philosopher of words!" He ran eagerly through the next case.

“Why, you have a whole library in this. I wish I were familiar with them all myself—the best thought of the last half century—this English school—Herbert Spencer, Huxley, Tyndall, Darwin, Ward, Lewes, Buckle, John Stuart Mill—look at them!—and only one case. Does the royal company run clear round the room?”

“See for yourself,” and Mr. Garnett made the only gesture of pride his friend ever saw in him. “Yes, I have some rare spirits there. I have to be here all the time so I brought them over. My wife—there are some things about which she is a little prejudiced and—I like to have them handy. If you intend to go on with your study you’ll find some help here—and I hope you’ll make use of it.”

“Thank you. I shall avail myself of that privilege. I’m going to begin with the book I want right now, Max Muller’s ‘Veda.’”

“Help yourself—but I want your attention now for the plans. The light is better on this table.”

He spread out the blue prints and they spent an hour discussing the details, over which both grew enthusiastic. It was dark when they put on their overcoats and went down to the door together, still discussing the future building. The personality of Mr. Garnett had never so impressed Northmore before; the development of his resources, his unostentatious scholarship, his broad and tender charity, made his acquaintance in this unexpected place an event of Northmore’s life.

He had forgotten in his absorption to take the vol-

ume of Max Muller, and went back after it. Mr. Garnett waited for him at the door, and still stood there as the young man repeated his "good-night" and went out into the clear, soft winter night. He looked back as he crossed the street. A flaring light in front illuminated the genial face under its corona of beautiful white hair—the figure would have made a study of perfect health. Northmore lifted his hat again as he caught Mr. Garnett's eye, and was warned of a broken curb at the corner; then he hurried away, congratulating himself upon the richness of this friendship.

CHAPTER XII

As he fell in with the irregular homeward-bound procession on Main Street, his mind full of the strong, quiet personality he had just left, and his courageous scheme for uplifting the standards of the wicked town for its youth, one brilliant beacon blazed alluringly through the gloom of the long street, the red and blue light of Fury's drug store. The rapidly widening circles of Northmore's mental horizon had given him farther reaches of vision and made him sensitive to vicious influences unnoticed before. He knew something of the country town and its problem, but he had not suspected how difficult of solution that problem was, nor how important. Thus far his efforts to reach the young people had failed, and for this reason he entered the more heartily into Mr. Garnett's scheme, which he believed would be a successful factor.

He had tried to learn where the half-grown boys and girls found amusement and spent their spare evenings, for he knew of no place suitable for them. As he reached the door of Fury's place this evening he saw that it was crowded with the very class in his thought, and as he passed two boys came out and stumbled against him. He stepped back laughing, and saying that he was in the shadow, when he saw that they were Mr. Money-penny's sons. They replied reluctantly and started home, when he noticed that the younger of the two could

scarcely walk, and was leaning on his brother. He turned after them:

“What is the matter with Willie?” he asked.

“He ain’t very well,” stammered the brother.

“Then you had better take him back and ask Mr. Fury to see what ails him. Was he taken sick in there?” He bent over the little fellow anxiously: “Did he get a soda—or something to eat?” For the boy’s head had fallen helplessly upon his brother’s shoulder. Then the minister straightened suddenly. “What does this mean, Jamie? Is it the first time it has happened?”

“Ye-es, sir; no, sir—I don’t know. Please don’t tell father. I was going to take him to the barn.”

“Tell me how it happened, James.” The minister’s tone was gentle, but it had a compelling quality.

“We just went in after school to see them play billiards on the new table, and Mr. Fury said he would stand treat if anybody made a big run—I don’t know just how big it had to be—and three fellows made it. Then he brought something up and gave it to them to drink, and there was a lot of us kids in there, and he said, ‘It’s too bad to leave the kids out. Come on and have some, too.’ I asked him what it was and he says, ‘Oh, it’s just cider and I’ve watered it well.’ It was awful strong, though, and I didn’t drink all mine, and Willie took up my glass and drank it. And it made him—sick.”

“Is Mr. Fury’s billiard room over the drug store?”

“It ain’t Mr. Fury’s, but it’s over his store, and he’s up there a good deal. Both the Fury boys are splendid

players. There's another room where there's a little table for pool."

"Does Mr. Fury sell these drinks himself?"

"I don't know."

"Were they brought into the billiard room?"

"No, we went into the other room, the hall, you know, Fury's hall, where we had the school exhibition."

"I am going home with you, James—or—no, I will not if you will promise to take Willie home and tell your father just what you have told me. Will you do that?"

"I don't know. Yes, sir, I will."

"Very well, good-night."

He did not recognise any of the other boys who swarmed down from the stairway, and it was his supper time, so Northmore hurried on, waiting a moment for Harrington to leave his empty store and walk home with him. He could not understand why a model store should go without trade when a place of which he had just learned such insidious wrong should receive the patronage of the town. He knew that Harrington was bitterly discouraged, and was almost ready to give up the struggle.

Supper was ready and Mrs. Jernigan stood at the window watching for them. She turned to give a last look out at the darkness.

"You didn't see anything of my Ben, did you?" she asked, and Northmore was glad to answer in the negative. Everyone else was so preoccupied during the meal that Mr. Jernigan indulged in a continuous

argument with himself on the fallacy of geometry in particular and a high-school education in general, citing his own wisdom as a sufficient example of his position in the matter. When he was left alone with Mrs. Jernigan for a moment, afterwards, Northmore asked abruptly, "What sort of man is Mr. Fury?"

"Joe Fury? Oh, I can't tell you. He is the pleasantest man in town. He smiles and smiles, and his smile is the worst thing about him. He would smile like that if you was bein' torn to pieces before him. His heart is as hard as the old greyhead out there. He's wonderfully popular with the boys, chaffs with them—makes fun of them, too, if they're too good, and nothing kills a boy like that."

"What's the reason that people don't patronise Mr. Harrington?"

"One reason is that Joe Fury's got some hold on most people, one way or another, and he says little things about Mr. Harrington that hurt him."

"What can he say?"

"One thing is that he's a Unitarian, the only one in town. He's got Mrs. Garnett down on Mr. Harrington for that. They both say it would be more honest to be an infidel out and out, that that's no religion at all. It would be better for Mr. Harrington if he wasn't anything."

"But Mr. Harrington attends our church regularly."

"Yes, I know he does, but he doesn't join it. Some folks thinks he goes there on Silence Garnett's account, but I don't believe that."

"And do you mean to say that there are people in this age who would refuse to deal with a man on that account?"

"Lots of 'em, just as the situation is. And Joe Fury works that hard."

"Is he considered straight in his own business?"

"No, I don't think he's straight, but he's that kind that you can't prove a thing on. I wouldn't trust Joe Fury with a ten-cent piece. I don't think anything would stop him from crookedness. I'm sure of that—but he's popular, and everybody is half afraid of his laugh."

The minister went up to his room to try to work something out of the tangle of affairs which had woven round him, but found Harrington standing before the blazing grate.

"I was too lonesome to stay in my own room, and there is no need of my going back to the store, so I have come in to bother you for a while. Are you going to write a sermon?"

"No, although I have a text for one. Why don't you put on your slippers and sit down. I have a basket of the finest pears you ever saw. My good people keep me supplied with fruit of the choicest."

"Thank you, I will. I want to talk over my affairs a bit, if you don't mind. I need some help—if only a listener."

He crossed to his own room and soon both had relaxed into slippers and house jackets and were stretched luxuriously before the fire with a heaping plate of

pears on the table between them. They were talking commonplaces as a sort of stairway to the more difficult confidences of ill luck, when the violent ringing of the doorbell arrested their attention, as well as the excited voice which they heard in the hall below. Then someone pounded up the steps and thumped the door, as though in alarm.

"Mis' Garnett wants you to come over right quick, Mr. Northmore," gasped Genevieve, breathlessly.

"What for? What's the matter?" both men spoke at once.

"Mr. Garnett's sick, I think."

Harrington was ready by the time that Northmore had flung on his coat: "There might be something for me to do," he said. "I am going with you."

The distance was so short that they reached the red brick house before the doctor, and Northmore led the way back to the familiar sitting-room as soon as the terrified maid admitted him. Mr. Garnett lay upon the couch breathing heavily. Northmore took his watch and dropped his fingers upon the lax wrist with such a professional manner that the women watched him with intense faces. Silence knelt at her father's side with her arms around him; the young man pushed her gently aside while he opened the clothing to listen at the heart. As he lifted his face again she met his eyes and read their alarm. She got to her feet and fell forward with a low cry. Quick as he was, it was not Northmore who caught her, but his friend, who carried her to the next room, and applied a restora-

tive while the others bent in wild anxiety over the unconscious form on the couch, waiting for a sign of returning life. The three doctors arrived together, the Old Doctor, Doctor Tommy, and little Benny Myers, the homeopathic doctor, who was a neighbour. They examined the silent form and exchanged glances. Little Benny Myers stood aloof until invited by the Old Doctor's eyes to speak. He had known the Old Doctor from his babyhood, and though they were professionally at sword's points, they were personally the best of friends.

Suddenly Mr. Garnett opened his eyes as if waking from a happy dream. "Bring her here, Harrington," commanded the minister sharply. Harrington almost carried the girl to her father's side; he looked up at her with a conscious, loving smile, and closed his eyes peacefully with a long sigh. Harrington supported Silence back to the next room, and the minister took Mrs. Garnett's ice-cold hand in his. She was perfectly collected.

"Don't tell me—not yet," she begged, warning him aside.

Then she fell on her knees beside her husband and took the limp hands in hers with a bitter cry: "Oh, my dear! Oh, my dear! And you were *not ready!* It is more than I can bear!"

Northmore was instantly beside her, whispering comforting words; no one could do more for her. They did not need to tell her that she was a widow, for she knew it as well as they. Gently the minister lifted

her to her feet and led her to her daughter, coming back himself to stand in stunned grief beside the lifeless form of the friend whom he had left but two hours before in the bloom of health and manly vigour.

The blow had fallen so suddenly that those present were paralysed; they could scarcely grasp its awful fact. Outside, the news blew over the town like a summer storm, and before many minutes the house was full of awe-stricken, sorrowing people, eager to render some service to one who appeared to have been the friend of each. One of the first to arrive was Mrs. Jernigan, in her gingham apron, her hands still moist from the supper dishpan, carrying old flannel and her camphor bottle. It was she who led Mrs. Garnett to her bed at midnight; she who brought Silence out of her long fainting fit, and cuddled her like a baby, until, toward morning, the poor girl sobbed herself to sleep on that motherly breast.

When the house was at last quiet, Northmore went out into the cold purity of the transparent night, and walked uncertainly, not in the direction of his home, but through the town and over the saddle to the spot where he had parted with his friend. He was shaken to his foundations by the shock, not only of personal loss, but of the obliteration of the vision of widened usefulness in co-operation with Mr. Garnett which he had barely glimpsed before it was dashed from him. The pottery hamlet was wrapped in silence as a soft garment as he stood under the same lamp which had illuminated the genial pink face at nightfall. The form rose

before him in the doorway so vividly that it seemed to be real, while he was sure that the delicate white mask lying in dreamless slumber upon its last couch must be a fabric of his imagination. He stood for a long time in the solemn silence before he went back to his room, where the dawn found him sitting with bowed head over his table, before a burned-out fire.

It was a hard task for him to go back to the desolated house that day, but he did so shortly before noon, and confronted Elijah Sims just coming from the door. Northmore had not met him since the Hallowe'en episode, though he had seen him at church once or twice, for the habit of years was strong and the old man's isolation drove him to his accustomed place rather than any feeling of friendliness. The minister extended his hand and it was taken.

"This is a bad occurrence, Mr. Northmore." Northmore winced at the hardness of the slow speech. "Sister Garnett feels it deeply. I think there's nothing sadder than a man who's ben knowing to the means of grace all his life, bein' taken unawares like this. 'Be ye also ready,' that's what I was jest sayin' to Sister Garnett. I feel to rejoice that I walked in the way of salvation when I was young, for 'the Son of Man cometh when no man knoweth,' and I don't make any excuse for Proctor Garnett, not a bit. He meant to make his peace at the 'leventh hour, but he was took at the tenth. The young people of this town ought to take warnin' at his example, fur they air a reckless lot. It ought to be pinted out to them."

“Do I understand that you expressed this to Mrs. Garnett?” demanded the minister.

“Why, yes, I had some conversation with her. I called in to—to sympathise with her. I tole her she hadn’t nothing to reproach herself fur; she’s laboured with him in season an’ out. We all know that. I tole her the only thing she could do now was to pint this as a warnin’ to her daughter and save her while it was yet time. Silence ain’t never ben hearty—an’ it’s a good thing to hev an example like this now an’ agin.”

The young man turned away abruptly with an indignant light in his eyes. Yet as he rang the muffled bell, resolving to cheer away that barbaric visitation, it flashed upon him that Elijah Sims had been only literal—cruelly and consistently literal—but no worse. What could he say to a rigid literalist like Mrs. Garnett that would be consistent? She met him with a sorrow in her ash-grey face that was inexorable, absolute. Her austere nature knew no compromise; her overwhelming personal loss was subservient to the awful penalty of her creed. Northmore pleaded the amelioration of her husband’s splendid record. She turned upon him severely.

“Mr. Northmore, there is no temporising with God. I have been taught from my earliest childhood that if a man is not saved—he is lost. There is no half-way course.”

“But your husband was a Christian, Mrs. Garnett, even if he made no formal profession. He did not need one.”

“He had no evidence of saving grace in his heart. He had never sought any. He died out of the church—as he had lived.”

“But he believed in God, and his life was that of a Christian. If that is not worthy in the sight of the Just Judge, what can any man hope for?”

“Don’t try to comfort me with what we both know cannot be. I am not a child to catch at a false hope. When you tell me that one who rejected the means of salvation all his life is saved, you are telling me that the Bible is false, and Christ’s death for us on the cross was useless. No, you need not say that. Mr. Garnett’s outward life was beyond reproach, but he was an infidel at heart. He read infidel books—and believed them. My burden is indeed heavy, but I must bear it to the end. The only thing you can do for me is to help me save my child.”

“Mrs. Garnett, this is simply awful. I preach no such doctrine. I know that Mr. Garnett proclaimed the tenets of his religion by deeds instead of words. I don’t know what faith it was, but I do know that it was vital.”

“No, no. He never accepted the efficacy of the Atonement to take away sin, and he held that a man should make no profession that his life did not forestall. He was brought up a Hicksite Quaker, and Elias Hicks was an infidel. He denied the power of Christ’s blood to wash away sin.”

The finality of her tone precluded the offering of any palliating compromise. The young man was dumb, not

daring to offer a still more urgent protest against the bigotry which cast an aspersion upon the blameless record of the sleeper in the next room. He had no logical artillery for a mind impregnable to reasonable evidence, yet he could not bear to leave such hopelessness uncheered, while he dreaded the reflex effect of the mother's conviction upon the daughter whom he had protected as far as possible. He asked for her, but she had not risen, and after another futile attempt at consolation, he went away, walking down the street in sad humility of spirit. Only twice had his priestly office of comforter been called into requisition, and twice he had failed to fulfil it. Ellis had assailed him because he represented his church. His own parishioner had assailed him because he did not. Where did he stand?

He found himself walking in the familiar direction of the pottery, drawn by a sense of responsibility to see that all was well there, and by a desire to visit again the spot where he had last seen the friend who had sown seeds in his mind that were already germinating. He was sensitive to subtle influences this morning, and it struck him that he would have known the nature of calamity which had befallen the town if he had come into it a stranger. In the subdued groups of people on corners and in doorways, in the unusual quiet of the Indian summer day, in suspended business, in grave faces that met him,—even in the children's silence,—he read the sorrow of universal bereavement. But he was hardly prepared by all of this for the emotion of the workmen at the pottery. The many-windowed building

was closed, and only such kilns as were already fired were burning; the hush of dire disaster lay upon the place, where men were gathered with pale faces and women wept softly in corners.

Mrs. Garnett's condemnation of her husband had sent his friend away with keen regret that the good man had not vindicated himself upon this one vital count which must now stand forever against him, but when Northmore saw the size of the vacancy he had left, he knew that it measured a great man. Just where, between the two standards, lay the true balance, he wondered. He went up to the private room where they had last talked, and felt that it still vibrated with the presence he had known there in its large manhood. He suddenly saw the strong character with an individuality of purpose too defined to be fitted into any but an individual creed, a character with the high courage to live its individuality alone. He took off his hat and stood silent a moment in the presence so real that he seemed to hear the hearty voice again.

Two days later the town poured around his church—for only three or four hundred women could get inside—and paid the tribute of grief to their townsman. When the majestic words that are said for the dead had rolled forth in his rich tenor, Northmore closed the Bible and stood mute for a moment, while a long indrawn sigh went around the room. Then his words rang out in no uncertain tone:

“We are come together to honour a life which recorded itself in deeds, not words; a faith which

needed no other profession than its living; a religion that knew in God, the Father, and in Man, the Brother. We have come to rejoice that it was our privilege to witness such a life; to mourn our loss that its earthly course is ended."

In silence broken only by grief, he gave a short sketch of the events of Proctor Garnett's years on earth.

CHAPTER XIII

As early the next morning as he thought proper, Northmore called at the red brick house to ask how he might be of use; to his surprise it was Mr. Firestone who opened the door for him with the air of a resident.

“You are staying here?” asked the pastor quickly.

“Yes, I thought I might be some protection to the ladies for the present, and there are many ways in which a man is needed in this time of trouble.”

Northmore walked into the familiar living room and took his favourite chair. The grate fire was burning tranquilly and the mild December sunshine made a little summer of the window plants. Mr. Firestone also seated himself with a sort of permanence, and Northmore said:

“I came over to see what there might be to do; I hope that something is left for me. How are they—how is Miss Garnett? She was prostrated last night by the shock.”

“I haven’t seen her, she hasn’t been down this morning at all, but I should say that she will recover sooner than her mother. The young are elastic—and the awful truths do not seem to be realised by this generation. But I tell you that Mrs. Garnett has a sorrow! The circumstances were awful—not one moment of warning—not one act of preparation; I was astounded

to learn that no prayer was offered for the dying man in the few moments that might have been so used. But I hope that the lesson will work a change of heart in Silence."

Northmore turned upon him with asperity: "It is not for us, you and me, to pronounce sentence upon such a man as Mr. Garnett. God is sufficient to do him justice."

Firestone flung back the rebuke: "It was doubtless God's purpose to waken the daughter from her stubborn apathy."

"I hope that you're not going to suggest such a thing to her?" Northmore's tone was a note of alarm.

"No better time for that will ever come."

"I beg you to remember, Mr. Firestone, that I am her minister and responsible to that extent for her spiritual welfare. I most strenuously object to any mention of the subject in that light."

Firestone reddened visibly: "Her mother knows your position in this matter, and feels that it will be a great mistake not to use the opportunity. And you are aware that I have a personal interest stronger than that of her pastor."

"But you would not—surely you would not take advantage of—of such a sorrow for the—advancement of personal interests," pleaded Northmore, with visible restraint of tone and manner.

"No, of course not. I am not wholly selfish, Mr. Northmore, and I would not do that—if it were my personal interest that was in the balance. I feel that it

is a matter of duty. I must return in a short time to my station. I must not go alone. The Lord has led me to Silence Garnett, but she will not read the message aright; it is no mere fancy; we—she and I—have no right to consult our personal preference when the Lord calls. I do not. I have loved once too well to give her the—place that is not yet empty. That is why I can urge duty upon another. I fulfil it myself.”

Northmore stared at him, but made no reply. He did not dare to express himself. Mrs. Garnett came down soon, and it developed that there was a way in which he could be invaluable. Mr. Garnett had been the mainspring of his business, its brain and bone. No one was in training to take his place; his wife knew of no person who could even look over his affairs—unless Northmore would advise her—or would do it himself. Would he? She knew that he had had business experience; she also knew that her husband had talked to him of personal affairs more than to anyone else. Otherwise the works must shut down for lack of a head.

Northmore knew that he would have been her husband's choice, and though it was a curiously incongruous blending of occupations, he gladly consented to take the supervision of the business until something could be decided upon, a task for which his rigid early training had fitted him far better than Mrs. Garnett suspected.

He took charge the next morning and found, as he had expected, that the factory was in such excellent running order, the workmen so competent and reliable,

and the system so methodical that only a manager was needed and that, after the first few days, he would not have to give too much time to it. There were spring orders to be filled, and to shut down meant such disaster to all concerned that it was urgent to keep the pottery running. He sent what books he needed over to Mr. Garnett's private room in the building, and devoted himself with such energy to his double vocation that both functions were well performed. He expected to be criticised, but, to his surprise, his prompt and efficient action met with universal satisfaction. Northmore was rapidly being assimilated by Mogadonia. His congregations had reached the point where people went simply because seats were hard to get, and one must go early. He was reminded that the time was ripe for a good old-fashioned revival; he wondered if the preservation of the model village, the continuation of Proctor Garnett's life work, could rank in importance with his spiritual field, yet he did feel that it was of sufficient need to be preserved at any cost of effort. It was to him a direct and sacred trust.

There was a selfish advantage in the demand upon his time and thought. Florida Morgan had gone home with her friend to spend the early winter—and this was the opportunity to recover from the madness of the autumn, to put her completely out of his life. Therefore he resolutely ignored the unforgettable face that would come between his eyes and the page of order book, sermon, or ancient history; he stifled the longing for her voice that rose in him when some girlish cadence

would repeat a phrase forever graven in his memory; he would turn with redoubled energy to his work when the deep, sweet eyes suddenly looked into his from the embers of his evening fire, resolved that he was now beyond their witchery, yet the chance hearing of her name, or the sight of a place with which she was associated, would choke him with the plunging of his heart. Yet he set his will as steel to crush out this futile passion.

One benefit of his business entanglement was to bring him into relation with the young people of the town, and to burden his conscience with a closer responsibility for their welfare. He was glad to see a growing attendance at his Sunday School, and at the evening service, but his optimistic feeling had scarcely anchored upon this indication, when it was wrenched loose by an occurrence which swept him out to sea.

The first snow of the mild season fell on the Friday before Christmas, a real wintry snow heavy enough for the rare sport of sleighing. The two Fury boys gave an invitation to their respective classes in the high school to go for a bob ride to an old-fashioned roadside tavern a few miles from Mogadonia on the Jackson pike. The house was kept by a cousin of their father, who really owned it, and the host was a genial landlord of a disappearing type, whose chicken suppers made the place an objective point for parties from all the surrounding towns. It was a great event for the pupils fortunate enough to be included in the invitation, among whom were the Jernigan children, who had never known

a greater dissipation than the annual Sunday School picnic at the Raven Rocks, and who dressed for the ride in their pathetic best. Northmore, coming home to supper from the pottery, wondered at the skill with which their mother kept these children neat on her impossible resources, to which he devised means of delicately adding a bit now and then; he helped more than he knew, in fact, for he never suspected that Genevieve Pearl's trim Eton jacket was made of the coat he had contributed to the rag carpet, nor that her felt hat was an old soft one of his blocked over, nor that the silk collar and cuffs of her sailor blouse had been his umbrella, nor that Ben in the same way owed him a whole suit. He stepped to the window with their mother to watch the noisy start, feeling something of her pride in them. He had grown fond of the Jernigans, and listened with patience to the even grind of the father's voice at the supper table as, with a red pillow in the back of his chair, he was discoursing—"Way back in seventy-nine—or was it eighty?—I mind when there was a sleighin' snow the Friday before Christmas——"

"Give Mr. Northmore the second jint, pa; he don't eat white meat."

"—An' a passel of men was here puttin' up telegraft poles, an' I says to them——"

"They was telephone poles, pa. We had telegraft long 'fore that."

"—Says I, 'Now so much foolin' with 'lectricity's goin' to affect the cli——'"

"Pass them sweet potatoes, pa. You'd let him starve if you got too deep in science."

"—The climate'—you've took sech a little one, Mr. Northmore; take that end one—and they laughed fit to kill, but I jest took an' old ledger and begin to——"

"Hold that plate straight, pa; you're pourin' gravy on the table cloth——"

"—Put down the kind o' weather we've hed ever sence——"

"Don't give me the ging and wizard. You know I like a leg, second helpin', pa."

"—A—an' ef I'd only thought to put down the weather before all this 'lectricity was turned loose, I could prove how much effect it's had on the climate—but I ain't got the figgers, you see. But I know, all the same."

"Now, pa, you've settled that, do eat yore supper so's I can get the dishes done up early."

Northmore had an extra task that evening, and he worked in the unwonted quiet of the house until the sound of uneasy footfalls below reminded him of the lateness of the hour. He put away his books, when it occurred to him that he hadn't heard the children come home, and then, hearing their mother's restless movements, he went downstairs to ask the reason of her anxiety. She told him that it was a very bad bit of road and that the late hour worried her. He offered to go and see if anything had been heard of the party, and she was glad to have him. It was after one o'clock.

As he went down town he saw a light in every house

from which a child was missing, and met several men on his own errand. No one had heard from the party, and no one had gone to meet them. He went back to Mrs. Jernigan and told her that he would get a horse and go in search.

"Oh, if you just will!" she cried gratefully. "My Ben was never out till 'leven o'clock in his life before—and I bet the other women are wild about their children, too. There's been many an accident on the steep road down Saddleback in broad daylight—and folks have been killed there."

The sleepy hostler told Northmore that almost every man in town had been there to ask if they had heard anything of the teams which carried the party. The minister galloped his horse at perilous speed over the soundless, slippery road, and reached the summit of Saddleback without finding a trace of the young people. Just over the level he met the foremost sled, its driver drooping and swaying so helplessly that a jolt would have pitched him from his seat. The reins were dragging from his hands, and the horses were going home at their pleasure, which they could do in safety as long as they were on the level or climbing a slope. The sudden apparition of a horseman from the still darkness frightened them, and they leaped forward and started down the dangerous incline at full speed, the heavy sled on their heels. Northmore wheeled and galloped after them, reaching for the bridle of the near horse, which shied away to the brink of the sheer precipice and along the edge at mad speed, before he could catch the strap,

and it took the strength of his iron grasp to guide the frightened span into the road again. It was now impossible to check them upon the steep declivity; he could only keep up with them and steer them to the foot, round the sharp curve, where the sled rose on one runner, over the bridge and up the opposite slope, where the weight of their load brought them to a willing halt, trembling and sweating. Northmore left them standing while he galloped back to meet the next sled before it should get to the danger point. The third was following this closely, its driver appearing to be able to control it after Northmore had shaken him up and told him of the danger. The second driver, however, relapsed into stupor and rolled back upon the children after responding to Northmore's vigorous hand with a selection of maudlin oaths. When the whole cavalcade had been piloted to the safe level where the horses could be trusted to their own instinct, the minister found Ben Jernigan and roused him sternly:

"What does this mean, Ben? What has kept you out until three o'clock in the morning?" he demanded.

Ben dropped his head stupidly, and the girl next him laughed in an unnatural tone. Startled beyond words, Northmore bent and scanned their faces in the snowy starlight, then he jerked up the driver again and got him out of his seat.

"Is there any boy here who is in condition to ride my horse?" he asked.

A youth in the rear of the sled rose from his cramped position and spoke clearly: "I can, sir."

“Then ride him home and I will drive the team. The others will follow.”

The exchange was made and Northmore soon reached the foot of the next low hill, where a group of anxious men waited for him. The children were rapidly distributed to their respective homes, and, last of all, it was his task to take Ben Jernigan to his mother, much as he wished to spare her the sorrow. She was watching for them from the doorstep, and Genevieve rose from the low seat and went to her.

“It was a break down? They didn’t run away?” cried the latter, hugging the girl wildly.

“No, it wasn’t either. The rest wouldn’t start any sooner. I’ll tell you—when we get Ben in. You’ll have to help him, he’s—asleep so sound.”

“Poor child! He ain’t used to night doin’s, an’ he’s an awful sound sleeper,” crooned the mother, lifting him to his feet. “Come in and go to bed, honey, where you kin sleep it out. Why—why, Mr. Northmore—”

“Sh, ma, take him in and I’ll tell you—don’t cry. He couldn’t help it!”

They carried Ben in between them, and he was put to bed, then Genevieve told the story to her poor mother and Northmore. They had had a hilarious ride out, though a long one, for the snow was so new and the loads were so heavy that the horses walked most of the way. A good hot supper was served when they arrived, after which they played games before the huge wood fire until the landlord told them the fiddler had come and they were to dance. Some of the children, like

Genevieve herself, were forbidden to dance by their parents, so a compromise was made on "Old Dan Tucker," which the landlord assured them wasn't a dance at all, merely a play. They made their awkward first steps to its inspiring strain with great zest, and went through the figures again and again, while the fun grew uproarious. A great bucket of beady cider was brought in for their refreshment, and they drank freely after the vigorous exercise. Some of the older youths kept their wits and made a homeward movement at midnight—but their drivers were having an occasion of their own in the big kitchen, and could not be found when sent for. Some of the children were frightened, and to allay their anxiety another bucket of cider was produced, with an accompaniment of mince pie and gingerbread—while livelier music was furnished for those who wanted to dance a two-step, and the merriment was resumed until the drivers did appear at the usual time that the older parties they brought started home. A few of the young people had been prudent enough to let the cider alone, but the others were unable to get into the sleds without assistance. The best homes in Mogadonia were disgraced and sorrow-stricken the next morning with the forceful tragedy of the country town.

Immediately after breakfast Northmore went in indignation to Mr. Fury, who had projected the expedition and was its host. The plump druggist came from the back of the store with his imperturbable smile;

rubbed his hands together and forestalled the arraignment in Northmore's eyes.

"Well, didn't those little rascals play a joke on us last night?" he chuckled. "My wife said she got to worryin' about them so bad she didn't sleep good, but I told her to remember that when a crowd of us youngsters got together, we never knew what time o' night it was. We stayed as long as the fun lasted. She forgets all about that, now she's got youngsters of her own," and he laughed his ready, mirthless laugh.

"Last night's affair can't be treated as a joke by any stretch of leniency, Mr. Fury." The man's eyes dropped before the accusation in Northmore's face. "Its consequences are of the greatest possible seriousness. Do you know the condition in which those boys and girls reached their homes?"

Mr. Fury laughed so immoderately that he couldn't recover breath to speak for two or three minutes. "That was too bad—'pon my word it was too bad, an' it was comical, too. The poor kids didn't know enough to stop drinking cider; you see they wasn't used to anything wetter'n milk 'n water, an' it strung them up. I never thought of such a thing."

"I believe that hard cider is intoxicating to grown people, isn't it? How did it happen that they went alone. The parents all understood that Mrs. Fury was to chaperon the children."

"Oh, that would have spoiled their fun. Let young folks alone, I say. In our day we never had a spy

taggin' 'long after us, and we were a sight better than the young folks that's watched so close now. Yes, my wife did think of goin' along, just for the fun of it, but she felt like she was takin' cold last night an' I advised her not to go out. A little experience is a great thing for children; it's the way they learn; they'll know more next time. Your boy that goes to the bad—he's the poor sucker that's never allowed to cut his eye teeth. I mean my boys to burn their fingers while they're little, an' they'll be sort of inoculated. Not that I ain't sorry that that little thing happened last night—I wouldn't have had it for the world, but I'm only sayin' it don't amount to anything. I told Jake to give the children the time of their lives, it was my treat, and he done the best he could—but for that the women of this town'll raise a hornet's nest round my ears that'll smart for months to come. And it ain't my fault. I didn't hold their children and pour cider down their throats. I didn't even know what Jake was goin' to give 'em. Gracious! Why don't they bring up their children to let stuff alone that they don't want 'em to have!"

He found the idea so amusing that Northmore's stinging rebuke died upon his own lips, and he turned abruptly away. He had gone to this man because he was the father of two bright, handsome boys, hoping that through his fatherhood he would respect the claim of other parents.

Northmore did not go home after his failure with Joe Fury. He walked over the spur to the pottery, burn-

ing with humiliation at his powerlessness to arrest the wickedness that flaunted under his eyes, or even to utter one word that would be intelligible to the chief sinner; yet he was the representative of the Most High to these people.

As he opened a drawer in his desk a roll of blue prints flew into his hand.

CHAPTER XIV

"It does seem like the months has been shook up in a bag this year, and we'd drawed May instid of January," grumbled Susan Jernigan to Priscilla Munson on a summery morning between Christmas and New Year. "Jest think of it, I found five ripe strawberries in my gardin this mornin'! It ain't Nature. Folks need winter; they need it to brace 'em up, and they ain't right without it. I feel weak myself, an' I take notice that the preacher is near about used up with it on top of his hard work. He's holler eyed an' thin, an' he won't eat the best chicken I can fry. He tramps up an' down his floor in slippers half the night, an' there's mornin's when he looks like he'd tramped the other half, too. I tell you, when a strong feller of his age goes back on his feed an' sleep, he's in bad shape, an' I'm worried to death about him. It would be jest Mogadonia luck, now that we've got the most wonderful man we ever heard of, to have him taken down with typhoid or the like, and lose him! I do wish it would turn in an' get cold!"

"It looks to me like it would take something worse'n weather to use him up like that," commented Priscilla, looking up from the darning in her weak white hands. She had not yet been out of doors, but her little rag-carpeted sitting-room was second only to Fury's drug store as a news centre.

"I don't know what trouble he could have; the pottery's running so slick, an' his church fairly bustin' with the people that goes."

"I've heard more'n one person suspicion that it was a girl was tormentin' him," and Priscilla suspended her needle to see if Susan would reveal any confidence that her boarder might have reposed in her.

"Well, that ain't so, an' I 'low I know the facts. He's jest as anxious for Mr. Harrington to git her as I am. If it wasn't fur her awful trouble about her father dyin' an' the holt it gives that thunder cloud of a missionary on Mis' Garnett, I believe that her an' Mr. Harrington would be engaged by now. La, Mr. Northmore knew that from the start."

"Likely he's got his mind on somebody he knew before he come here. It ain't in reason that a young man of his age never cared for anybody."

"I'd have knowed it long ago. No, he ain't a marryin' man. You never saw a man with his heart so set on his work as that one. He's jest thinkin' of it night an' day, an' that's the reason he's turnin' this town upside down. Now, I can tell you a wonderful secret if you won't tell a soul. He don't know that I know it, but Mary Fanny MoneyPENNY heard the stewards talkin' it over when they met at her house."

"Honest, I won't tell a soul. Out with it, Susan!"

"It's the biggest boost ever come to this town. Tom Morgan is goin' to give Mr. Northmore thirty thousand dollars to build as big a church as the one at Bellevue. Now, what do you say to that?"

“Not to *our* church?”

“Yes, ma’m, to our church. He’s just so taken with our preacher as that. Of course we’ve got to do part—but thirty thousand dollars fur a church that he ain’t a member of! Did you ever hear the like of that? Now kin you imagine what that young man is worryin’ nights about when he’s had a stroke o’ luck like that?” Priscilla smoothed out a ragged waist.

“Well, Mary Quiggins is doin’ my washin’ this winter. You know her husband was crippled on the Bellevue church, and she was talkin’ ’bout that very thing last Monday. She’d heard that Tom Morgan wanted to give every church in town the half of a new buildin’, and she said that Mr. Northmore wouldn’t touch his money. He’s been to see Quiggins lots of times, and you know how hot he was against Morgan; well, I guess lots of other folks is, too. They say Joe Fury offered five thousand to start a new Presbyterian church. Seems like money’s just lyin’ around loose, where a body that needs it can’t get a cent!”

Susan flared at the mention of the druggist’s name. There were hollows under her own eyes, but her mother pride kept silence about her grief.

“Well, if that church’ll take Joe Fury’s money I’m glad I’m not on their track to Heaven. He had an opening of his new soda fountain a little while back an’ Mary Fanny Money penny told me fur sure that he had a lot of school children there, treatin’ ’em to whisky-flavoured drinks—for future customers. A church that’ll take his money ’ll be struck by lightnin’, sure—

him ruinin' our boys! That money would carry a curse."

"No, it wouldn't, Susan. If him an' Tom Morgan didn't get their money right, it ondoes the harm when it's put to a good use."

"If your only boy'd ben started on the road to ruin by Joe Fury, you wouldn't see him uplifted by doin' good with that money. No, sir, you'd burn it if it come into your hands. Of course, I ain't no grudge against Morgan, an' I think it's all right to spread the gospel with his money." Susan's voice broke at this and Priscilla looked away contritely. "Joe Fury don't belong to that church. His wife does, an' he goes once in a while when he thinks somebody's goin' to prosecute him. He wants to buy a backin' of respectability, that's all. Think of him bein' on a higher level in the subscription list than the Old Doctor, that's given his life to doin' fur this town—on the quiet," Susan sobbed out indignantly.

The holidays passed in rainy mildness; the New Year stole in on a thick fog and veiled the dawn in blood-red mist. The incessant rain could not keep Northmore from tramping on the yielding brick sidewalk by the hour, because the black batter of the roads to his beloved woods was impassable, while he was obliged to work out in muscular exercise the fever that burned his blood and throbbed in his pulses. The time was at hand when he must open his revival; when he must decide upon the Morgan fund—and when he must forget Florida Morgan! He knew the confident expectancy with which

his elder members looked forward to the greatest revival that the region had ever known, such a regeneration of primitive faith as would mark an epoch in the church. But, face to face with himself on the eve of this awakening, he wondered where he stood. Every week of his eventful ministry from the preliminary talk with Quiggins, had tossed him against a new rock of doubt, until his soul was bruised and torn. What did he really believe? What did duty require him to preach to this church? But had he any choice? The revival must begin on this first Sabbath night of the New Year.

The sun came out for a few tantalising moments on Sunday morning, and then the deluge was on again. When Northmore walked to his church in the evening over spongy pavements, the dense humid air stifled his depleted vitality almost to exhaustion. He tried to breathe the fog which draped skeleton trees, surrounded street lamps with luminous penumbra, and made each window a nimbus of misty light. It even filled the corners of the church with grey glooms, in which the densely packed faces were blurred as in an impressionist picture. The stoves were red-hot.

He met Firestone at the door and felt that he must invite the missionary to the pulpit. There they found the presiding elder, an oldish man with a kindly face which beamed in a fatherly smile upon the two younger men.

"I want to congratulate you, Northmore," he whispered over his hymnbook. "I never expected to see in my time such a house as this in Mogadonia. It

has been a notorious charge—the hardest in the district—for thirty years; we’ve broken more than one good man on this wheel, and I pitied you when the appointment was made, but the Lord was in it. *You were the man.* Now, you’re going to sweep the town with a revival that will make you famous, particularly in these days. Then you can build a fine new edifice, and Mogadonia charge will loom up redeemed and glorified—to your credit. I envy you the chance. You have only one danger—you are a little too radical; it is the vice of some of our brightest young men. I can see how the importance of works as a visible sign appeals to a young man—but it’s Repentance that carries on a revival. Repentance and Salvation. Fill a man full of the Holy Ghost and his deeds are all right.”

The bell stopped tolling. The last hymn trailed off into a tense, expectant hush; Northmore, with a greyish pallor in his face, stepped to the pulpit and opened the Bible, looking blindly through the pages he turned for something he seemed to have forgotten. Then a panic seized him. What was it that his sermon was about? He had never used notes. He turned the pages slowly to make time, and the tension of silence increased. His voice must break it. He read at random a passage which sprang into sight before him, part of the twelfth chapter of Luke. Closing the book, he passed his handkerchief over his wet forehead, and wondered vaguely why he stood on the rack before all those eager faces. What had impelled him to enter the ministry.

It was a supreme moment. A voice rang out in his consciousness, "How can you preach what you don't believe?" and he glanced quickly to see if others had heard. Then he heard his own voice speaking in dull platitudes that came automatically, while all the time his brain was in a stupor, and he was acting subconsciously. He groped for new thoughts, but they eluded him. He toiled desperately on until a glance at the clock told him that he could decently stop. He turned with a motion of invitation to Firestone, and sank into his chair. In a moment the sonorous words of the missionary were ringing through the disappointed silence of the congregation.

"Brother Northmore has told us the truth, my friends, but he has not told us half the truth, nor the hundredth part. Human tongue could not tell us that if it talked for a year—the blessed, glorious truth of Salvation—the terrible truth of Damnation. Mr. Northmore has told us the value of the Christian's life—but not the glory of his death. He has said nothing of the sinner's awful doom. Now, my friends, let us look on that picture; let us look on that terrible picture for a moment! Do we realise what it means to be lost? To be lost—to be eternally damned!"

There was a breathless pause and the speaker went on:

"Listen to that clock ticking back there,—tick,—tock,—tick,—tock! And with every tick a soul is going down into eternal darkness; tick,—tock,—tick,—tock! One—two—three—four—have gone while I

am telling you this; it may be that some one of you will go before the dawn. Oh, why do you take such awful risks when salvation is free? How many of us have gone down that dark way since last month—since last week? You will never know. They cannot be counted except by the angel at the gate who turns them away for the great Day of Reckoning. It is only by the grace of God that you are given this one more chance—and for someone here it will be the last chance. There's an empty chair at some firesides to-night; were the dear ones who sat there prepared for the great change? What would you give if they could have your chance to-night? Are you ready for the summons? Don't comfort yourselves that you lead moral lives and keep the commandments; it is not sufficient. We are told in this book, 'Except a man be born again, he *cannot* enter the kingdom of Heaven.' No matter what your life has been, you must be washed in the blood of Jesus. If you are pure in morals, you still need it as much as the vilest sinner. If you are the vilest sinner, you can be washed as white as the purest angel. There are no degrees in Salvation.

"What would you give if your dead had been washed in that abundant fountain? We see them fall around us without one word of warning. Last week five men were brought up from one of our mines, cold in death. Had they prepared for that when they went down to work in the morning? You who have lately stood beside your lost dead know what that means. Don't put off your own repentance until it is too late. Too late!

Oh, the horror of that death, for it never ends! Thousands of years will make no difference; you will be no nearer the end than when you first began."

"Amen!" groaned a man, and, "Lord have mercy," shrilled a woman's voice.

"When the gates of Hell are shut upon you they never open. Years will come and years will go, and age on age will roll away, and the millenium will pass and the earth will be destroyed, but the gates of Hell are shut forever! Think of that! Forever and forever! And which side will you be on, my friends? Forever and forever!"

"Praise the Lord!" irrelevantly quavered an old man.

"Forever and forever, and if you are inside the gates you are saved—forever and forever! Now let us sing one verse of the old hymn while those who want salvation come to the altar. Let us sing:

"There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Immanuel's veins,
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains."

The impressive old hymn rose in a wailing minor key, the elder coming forward and giving a brief exhortation above the voices of the congregation. When it had died away, he signed to Firestone to pursue his talk, knowing that he could not take up the key that had been pitched. The younger man, his face burning with earnestness, went on:

“Now is the appointed time, Come to the foot of the cross, you who have repulsed the Holy Spirit all your lives. Come now! The Lord bless you, Brother! Now, let another come. Glory, glory, come on, Sister. Jesus is waiting for you.”

A worn elderly woman hurried timidly down the aisle and knelt at the altar, touching elbows with the gaunt, shabby youth who had come first. A frightened little girl crept up beside them. Northmore's eyes had fastened upon the two slender women in deep mourning in the Garnett pew the moment the elder began to speak. At this point he shivered from head to foot, and dropped his head upon his hand, while the elder fervently breathed: “God be praised! There is joy in Heaven to-night!”

For Silence Garnett, her face rigid as the dead who have died in pain, wavered down the aisle and sank to her knees before the bench. She covered her bowed face with her handkerchief. The singing faltered and rose again, tremulous with tears. When the last note had faded from the room, the elder signed to Northmore to lead in prayer, and the young man recalled his senses to pour forth a fervent invocation. As he rose from his knees, an old, old woman started the song,

“We're going home to die no more.”

It was carried by voices discordant with emotion, while the elder's earnest plea could still be heard above the notes. Before it was ended the mourner's bench was filled with weeping people. Northmore followed

with prayer, his subdued words making a lull in the passion of the hour. It was succeeded by

“Shall we gather at the river?”

Northmore's eyes had never left the slight, kneeling form of Silence Garnett, and noting that the elder was looking at her also, the young minister anticipated the other's intention by stepping down inside the rail and dropping upon one knee before her as she knelt with her cheek on one hand, with wide open, unseeing eyes. Her other hand lay on the bench and he covered it with his own.

“Did you need to come here?” he asked quietly.

She gave a hysterical dry sob. “I had to. It's killing me.”

“What is?”

“My sin. I can't live in it any longer, and I am afraid to die. I am not saved.”

“What is your sin?”

“Why, it is—why—I can't just tell.”

“What have you done?”

“I don't—know. I think it is what I haven't done.”

“What haven't you done?”

“You know; it was not—doing this. Not—seeking—salvation and repenting of my wickedness.”

“Can you tell me why you have never done so?”

“No—it seemed that I couldn't; I just couldn't! And, now, it is too late! Oh, my dear father! God has punished my wickedness by taking him—and he—must—must suffer—forever and forever! Oh, I can-

not bear it! I cannot live and bear it—and I cannot die. I am afraid. And I don't think I want to be saved if—if father is not. Why couldn't I have been taken in his place?"

He saw the throbbing of fevered blood in her temples, the deadly white fever of overtense nerves. Her lips were white and dry and her words came in convulsive gasps. He was wrung with pity; he answered hotly, "Don't torture yourself with such fears for another minute. God is not a monster; He is a tender, loving Father. Take your troubles to Him and He will give you peace."

"I don't know what that means."

"Would you know how to go to your own father if you were troubled about anything?" The minister's voice was very gentle.

"Papa? Oh, yes. He would take me in his arms and say, 'Wait, little daughter, and the Spirit will come to thee in time.' He said that to me the only time we ever talked about it. But, now, he is gone and he was—not saved—and I cannot bear it!"

"Don't believe that for an instant. Whoever has told you that has traduced your father's memory with a cruel aspersion. You can only do yourself lasting injury by thinking of it. I can't talk longer now, but I am going to walk home with you after the meeting as there are things I want to say to you. In the meantime, try to calm yourself, for you have no occasion to grieve like this."

As Northmore rose to his feet the worn little woman

near Silence cried out joyfully, "Thank the Lord, I'm saved, I'm saved! Glory, glory! Oh, dear Lord!"

A hoarse chorus of acclamation joined her voice. Electric currents of emotion thrilled through the house. The humid, heated air quivered with human feeling; the murmur swelled to uproar; women ecstatically embraced one another; men shook hands with tears of sacred joy upon their faces; the elder's voice broke as he tried to start a hymn and he wept without restraint.

One face grew white and grave—the pastor's. At the meeting's close he dispersed the people with lifted hands in benediction, then waited aloof until he could walk quietly away with Silence Garnett, her mother preceding them with the elder, who was staying at her house for the meeting. At first the quivering girl could scarcely speak, but when the open air and the magnetism of his protecting masculine presence had restored her self-control, Northmore led her into a quiet street a little farther round to gain time enough, and began with some commonplace. Then he said earnestly:

"I think it is due to your father's memory to tell you that his simple practice has revolutionised my understanding of religion. I was probably the last person to whom he talked, and in that last afternoon I got a glimpse of applied Christianity that will forever weaken profession in my eyes. Your father had no need to publish his creed. He lived it."

"Oh, I know that. His life was perfect and he never had a selfish thought. But—that does no good—they say—that he was never—never——"

"Who has dared to take judgment from the hands of God? If Mr. Garnett's life went for nothing—what hope is there for the world? In the very nature of things, righteousness must work its own salvation. I only hope that my own record will be as clear." His quiet voice carried conviction.

"Do you truly mean—Mr. Northmore, you wouldn't say that just to comfort me?"

"Tell you a falsehood? No."

She drew a long, fluttering breath. "I can't take in the meaning of that just yet. I have suffered so!" She covered her face and he felt the tremble of her sobbing. They walked very slowly for a little way and she went on in a voice that was unruly in spite of her effort: "But that doesn't atone for me; my sin is just the same—isn't it?"

"Can you tell me now what it is?"

"I think it began when I was a very little girl; mother took me one night to a meeting like this one, and I couldn't understand; it frightened me. It does now, and I don't understand yet; but when Mr. Warner talked to me about myself, and then I heard to-night about people who had—been taken—like father—it seemed that I had to go. Something drove me. Ever since that first time when I was a child I have been afraid I should die in my sleep and be—lost—and I often dream that I am. It has been torture all my life and I never could tell anyone before. I didn't know what I must do and I couldn't speak of it."

"And did no one ever understand?"

“Never before. I thought I was too wicked to be saved—and yet—I couldn’t go forward—I couldn’t. The thought of it makes me tremble now.”

The piteous catch of her breath at the memory touched him beyond words; he grew stern. “One thing is certain,” he said; “you must not go forward again. Your physical condition demands some consideration and—there is no need of it. I am this moment seeing a light for which I have groped ever since coming here. I have got it now. We have misunderstood; you have committed no sin in your innocent life to be expiated by such pain. God is not wrath—that was the old barbaric idea before love was known, and we must slough it off. Christ came to teach us how to live without sin, not to be sacrificed as a blood offering for us. Religion is for life, not for death, for the uplifting of us on earth, not in Heaven. If we have it here, we shall have it hereafter. We are to live out our own salvation, not to rely upon a substitute penalty in Christ’s death for wrongs that we may commit. Under immutable law such a thing could not be.”

“You mean that we need not fear—anything that we don’t understand?”

“Exactly. We have nothing to fear but ourselves—our own conscious wrong doing.”

“Oh, can you be sure of that?”

“Absolutely. The conviction will change my life from this moment. You are too much overwrought to realise how it simplifies all the intricate problems, but it will gradually bring you great peace and give your life a far broader motive than the mere protection of your

own soul for the future life. To me it means much; among other things it means that—I must fail in my work. I must give it up—and other aims that make it almost a tragedy.”

“Give up your work! Oh, Mr. Northmore, just when you are making over the town! No one has ever had such influence before.”

“I know of no capacity in which I can stay. It would be disloyal to my church to preach an alien faith—and I cannot—do what I have vowed to do. It comes with a shock; it is an utter uprooting.”

“But, what shall we do without you?”

“Far better than with me—if I am wrong. It is a tremendous trust—the charge of a church. I wonder why I ever undertook it; it was a struggle from the beginning. My religious life came through broken bonds and estrangement from my family. Their very opposition made it the more precious to me. Now, to abandon what has cost me so dear and to announce the failure of my holy calling is a fitting climax. It crucifies my pride of purpose—and yet, even that is a relief after the torment of doubt.”

“Ah,” sighed the girl, forgetting herself in the moment of privileged confidence: “But you will stay just a little longer. We need you so much.”

“I shall have to; I have made no plan; there has not been time. I only know that I owe it to my church to leave—to break my consecration vow. But, whatever else we do, we *must* be true to our convictions—in everything. All our life questions hinge upon our conceptions of duty.”

He felt her start and tremble as he guided her up the steep street.

"Do you think it would be right—to—to—refuse to give one's life to—a service that one did not like—could not bear—if it were a great work?" she returned timidly.

He understood. "Do you mean the missionary service?" he asked quietly.

"Yes."

"There is so much else involved in your case that you will have to decide it personally."

"If some other person's usefulness depended upon yours. If it meant——"

"If I loved that other person so well that I could honestly marry, I would do so. If I felt strongly called to the missionary service, I would enter it. But they are two questions. If I did not truly and deeply love the other person—I could not desecrate the marriage vows by a lie."

"Would it mean—that?"

"What else could it mean?"

They walked in silence to the top of the hill and crossed to the door. As he turned to say good-night Northmore added: "You will not be afraid now, will you, nor troubled by extraneous doubts? The Heavenly Father sorrows with you, not against you."

"You have changed my life in this little talk," she answered gratefully over the warm clasp of his hand. "I think I must have gone mad without it."

CHAPTER XV

HE did not walk the floor that night in travail of spirit, but slept soundly in the reactive calm which follows a calamity whose worst has fallen. His days of suspense had culminated in decision.

He had barely gone up from breakfast the next morning when he heard steps, which he divined to be the elder's, mounting the stairs.

"Well, Northmore, I'm relieved to see you in good shape this morning," and he shook the minister's hand long and heartily. "I was so worried about you that I couldn't sleep. You looked as if you were just setting in for a spell of sickness. Hadn't you better see a doctor?"

"No, I am perfectly well."

"I certainly hope that you are, for if ever a man needed his strength, you do now; it is the opportunity of a lifetime—and more than that. It is little less than a miracle; I've never seen the like in my experience. It was worth a great deal to get Silence Garnett to the altar; I hope the poor girl will be soundly converted; that is now the one wish of her mother's life; she has been terribly worked up about Silence since her husband's death; she felt that if that didn't reach the daughter nothing ever would. Firestone has had her on his mind, too, and I suppose that put force into his

exhortation last night. Wasn't it a grand effort—and wasn't it fortunate that he happened to be there when you were so used up yourself?"

Northmore writhed in his chair, then got up and took a turn across the floor, head down, hands in his pockets. It was hard for him to begin what he had to say. The elder watched him in doubtful expectancy, seeing the unusual in his manner.

"Yes," he faced the elder at last; "he reached her, Mr. Warner. There's no doubt of that, and I'm afraid he reached me, too. She was terribly overwrought. I walked home with her last night; she was in such a state of hysterical nervousness that I was afraid of consequences. She is too near the shock of death to endure an emotional strain just yet, if she ever could stand it. I tried to reassure her a little—and I told her not to come to any more of the meetings."

"You did! But she was not converted?"

"Not in the sense you mean."

"Then I don't see why that was necessary. She was thoroughly under conviction—in fulfilment of her mother's lifelong prayer. She would soon have found peace."

"It didn't seem so to me after talking with her; I was afraid to risk any further excitement for her. And I told her more than that, Mr. Warner; what I must tell you now; I told her that I didn't believe it myself—what was preached last night. I never took in its full meaning before—the wrath of God and salvation by the vicarious death on the cross."

The elder sprang to his feet, pale with consternation. "Northmore, do you know what you are saying? I don't believe you do; you have been overworking; you looked as if you had a fever last night?"

"I am in full possession of my faculties, but I have lost my faith in a doctrine for which I never did understand the reason."

"But you believe that nothing but the blood of Christ can cleanse us from sin and save us to life everlasting? You can't get away from that!"

"I don't interpret it that way. Christ never taught it; He never called Himself the Atonement, nor anything that had that significance. He called Himself the Way, the Truth, the Life, the Vine, the Door, the Bread of Life, but never once the propitiatory sacrifice on the altar of an angry God. Why should He, Mr. Warner? God is not Baal—to require human sacrifice. We have misinterpreted Christ's ministry to us for two thousand years. He came to our salvation, truly, but to uplift us to the spiritual, not to offer Himself as a pagan blood offering."

The elder was dumfounded; it was fully a minute before he could recover himself to stammer: "But—then—what's the use—what do you think Christ did come for?"

"He came to lead us out of the physical into the spiritual stage of our religious evolution. In Him the down-reaching of the Divine met the up-reaching of the human for the first time. From Him we look backward to our physical heredity in the animal and forward to

our spiritual heritage in God. His pagan hearers could not grasp His spiritual ideals, hence they gave to His martyrdom the office of purification by blood before their Moloch-Deity. And it is for us to strip it of its paganism."

The elder had collected himself by this time: "But, Brother, do you realise what you are saying? You have ripped out the very cornerstone of religion and substituted a lot of Darwinism instead! Why, it is the sheerest madness! You are not well; you have brooded over the matter till you have got morbid and the Adversary has got hold of you. Reason won't do you any good; I never knew a doubting man saved by reason. Make a tremendous effort to cast out the evil that has taken possession of you, and ask the Lord to help you."

"It's no use, Mr. Warner. I've tried that for the last three months and suffered torment in the struggle; the solution burst on me in a flash last night. It's simply the old Jewish rite of Atonement, and I can't accept it."

"But, Northmore, good gracious—I think you're crazy! To split hairs over your own faith in the opening of the grandest revival this region has ever known! You can redeem a hundred souls in this wicked town; a hundred immortal souls look to you for salvation. Do you dare to shirk that responsibility? Remember your ordination vows; get down on your knees and ask for your own salvation from this wicked heresy."

"Save a hundred souls from—what? From—whom?" Northmore shook his head in painful decision.

“From committing sin—yes, but from the vengeance of the God who made them—never!”

The elder relaxed his tense attitude and leaned back helplessly in his chair: “Well, Northmore, the bishop warned me that you would need looking after when he sent you down here—but he never told me what a bright fellow you are—nor what a stiff-necked one! You surely have too much good sense to go off on a tangent and throw up a chance—yes, a duty like the one before you. You can only ruin yourself and harm others; you can never overthrow the old stronghold of Christianity with all your infidel reading.”

“I don’t propose to overthrow Christianity, Mr. Warner. I never wanted to uphold it so much as I do now that I see its full purpose. I want to see it stripped of pagan husks down to the kernel. My reading has strengthened my faith; the secular writers unconsciously offer the strongest argument for religion and the world’s need of it; their only quarrel is with bigotry. They find God in His laws—not in ancient rites; the greatest accusation against them is that they do not find theology—which is human.”

“But Darwinism is an insult to every Christian——”

“Did you ever read him?”

“No, I have no business to; I preach the gospel. A man who is hard at work saving souls has no time to find out whether his grandfather was a monkey, and he can point the way to Heaven without knowing. I never read a line of the stuff; what business has a minister to go around hunting new heresies when there are

enough old ones to fight. Leave such books alone and you will have no trouble with your faith."

"I have not lost my faith."

"What do you propose to preach?"

"Only the things of which I am sure myself. I must go on with my meetings—if you are willing to trust me. I realise that, but I shall not preach what Firestone did last night—the fear of eternal damnation and the possibility of extraneous propitiation. I believe that salvation must be earned, and that each of us must earn it for himself. It is from ourselves that we require salvation, not from God, and even His great love cannot confer it upon any man. It is a developing of our better nature from within, not an artificial gift from without. That is not possible in the nature of the eternal verities. That is what I will preach—but I will not lie in the pulpit."

"You don't have to. I don't—nor the consecrated thousands who are uplifting the world. Let the Higher Criticism alone and get back into the harness. Study your Bible; you won't find your heresies in it."

"That is exactly where I did find them."

"Not in the Bible! But, of course, many a wicked sect has been founded upon some perverted reading of the Bible. It takes faith even for that. Now, where did you get any such doctrine?"

The elder's tone was gentle; he was patiently trying to lead back a stray to the fold. Northmore rose again and took a turn across the room before he replied: "I can hardly tell you in a few words; it has been a side

study for years. The orthodox conception of Christ's place in our creed jarred me as being too gross for the present spirituality of the church; it seemed that the time was ripe to strip off the fungus of myth and comprehend the pure and lofty principles of Christ in the open light. We have misunderstood for a long time: Christ brought the love of humanity first to the world—yet was made, Himself, the first Hebrew blood offering upon Aryan altars! He disdained ritual—and was made the nucleus of a ponderous system of theology! He taught eternal life—and was proclaimed the herald of eternal death! The fusion of the two world currents of belief, the Greek and Hebrew, was attributed to Him, with the Atonement of the Shemites bodily adopted—as we have it to-day, in place of the simple austerity of His own teaching.”

“But, my dear young friend, Christ taught that great doctrine.”

“Not in the New Testament. The propitiatory idea was old—old as the race. The very first act of human worship was the offering of sacrifice in its crudest form, merely the giving of food to savage gods fierce with hunger, that, appeased, they might not inflict pestilence, famine, and tempest from sheer rage. The savage mind knows only a god in its own image. The Hebrews when they left Egypt were little above the surrounding pagans, and their offerings to Jehovah did not differ from their offerings to Baal. The very first uplift toward spiritualisation of their worship was the burnt offering.”

"I see no spirituality in that," said the elder, listening with close attention.

"It was one degree less gross when the worshipper, instead of leaving the food for the gods to decay upon the altar, decided to burn it, that the savory smell might rise to the invisible god and conciliate him. Thus, Noah 'buildded an altar and took of every clean beast and every clean fowl and offered burnt offerings upon the altar; and the Lord smelled a sweet savour and said in His heart, I will not again curse the ground.' "

"The Hebrews were a most primitive race themselves in that early time," interpolated the elder.

"Precisely. Then, you see, with the burnt offering begins the office of priesthood, that of mediant between the suppliant and a wrathful god. That was an important stage of the evolution; it marked the dawn of intellectual function in the race and the setting apart of a class for its cultivation. A still higher stage was reached, long after, when incense was substituted for the materialism of the sacrifice."

"I don't see yet what all that has to do with our doctrine," and there was relief in the elder's tone.

"It is the thing itself. In the course of ages was evolved a higher conception of the gods, that of sentient beings demanding revenge for personal indignities, instead of irrational monsters dangerous from hunger. Then came the awakening of conscience and the birth of human justice. The willingness to expiate a wrong could be prompted only by knowledge of wrongdoing. At this stage grew the idea that it was the shedding of

blood which appeased the diety. The first code of law was severely simple: A life for a life; and its enforcement is first shown by the attempt to avoid its penalty by the substitution of another life for that of the culprit. He argued in his guilty soul that innocent blood would be most acceptable to the deity—as well as most convenient for him to shed—so he substituted the thing most precious in his own eyes, the finest of his flocks and—alas for the horror of it—the most pure and precious human lives at his mercy! So began the vicarious atonement for sin, the sacrifice of innocent blood. The primitive origin of a rite is soon lost in its formalism, however, and in time the offering came to be made in general propitiation for sin in the aggregate.

“In Exodus, 22, twenty-ninth verse, is the commandment, ‘Thou shalt not delay to offer the first of thy ripe fruits and of thy liquors; the firstborn of thy sons shalt thou give unto me.’ In that command is recapitulated the whole history of sacrifice; the fruits, the libations of wine, and the sacrifice of the firstborn son as a blood offering. Now, in what did such worship differ from that offered to Baal or Moloch or Dagon? Can you see any distinction, Mr. Warner?” Northmore had seated himself before the elder and held him with earnest eyes.

“Well, the form does seem similar, though it undoubtedly differed in spirit. Naturally, many of their pagan forms got mixed with the early worship of God.” The elder withdrew a little as if oppressed by the other’s careful analysis of his subject.

"Precisely. Exactly. And don't you think that the time has now come to separate those pagan forms from the worship of God? The conclusion is, to me, irresistible. I have given you the briefest synopsis I could put into words. And you see where I stand."

"I don't see yet what that has to do with the Atonement as we preach it."

"That came next in the spiritual evolution, the first conception of a deity better than man. The people could now grasp the idea that not vengeance, but the renunciation of a precious thing for His sake was grateful to the Lord, the germ of altruism. An example is the arrested sacrifice of Isaac. To this stage belong hermit lives, vigils, fastings, celibacy, flagellations. Human sacrifice continued at least till the time of Jephtha, but the spiritual idea gradually displaced it until the next stage was a long leap, appearing first in Amos, then in Hosca and Isaiah, and bringing us virtually to Christianity. It taught that the service God requires of us is love and forgiveness to our fellow man, and that the only sacrifice acceptable to Him is of our dearest vices. So the later Hebrew prophets taught, though many black and bloody centuries of idolatry and of martyred innocence lie between the pagan sacrifice and the altruism of Christ."

Northmore's face was luminous with feeling, and the elder's was a strange study. The young man got to his feet again and went on impetuously: "But the saddest of it all is, that after we had reached that exalted ideal we should fall into one of the dreadful reversions that

have turned back the wheels of civilisation. Even after Jesus had taught us to say 'Our Father,' we fell back to barbarism and construed his cruel martyrdom into a blood offering—to the wrath of God. Now, you see how I have reached my conviction, and why I can never again in the pulpit present that conception of Christ as a Saviour. I could preach Christ—with my whole life, but as the blood offering—never."

Mr. Warner went over and laid a hand on the young man's shoulder as he stood before the fire: "I am going to make one more appeal, Northmore. I can't give you up without, for I have grown more interested in you than ever, and I cared a good deal before. I have never before had a young man of your power and honesty in my charge, and it simply breaks my heart to have you make shipwreck so rashly. The Church needs men like you, men of the good old stamp. Hold your horses a little now and you will see your way to reconcile this plausible new heresy with your old faith. Get down and pray for a fresh baptism of the spirit, and I will pray for you as I never prayed before."

Northmore lifted the kind hand in a warm grasp and his face saddened:

"No, it's too late for that. There's a complication to the situation: You know that we are offered a munificent sum for a new church building."

"Yes, indeed, I know it, and it does seem as though the world had been laid at your feet. I never heard of such a flood of success in five months in all my life before."

"No, I don't look at it in that light. It's all a part of the same question. Everybody in the country round knows how Mr. Morgan made his money. It is not right for him to make propitiation through us for his wrongdoing."

"You don't mean to *refuse* thirty thousand dollars!"

"I haven't the power to refuse it, but I will not be a party to its acceptance."

"Why, Northmore! Have you gone clean daft? That question has never been raised in the world. Think what an opportunity to do good it will offer to you! And to refuse it will mean utter ruin. Do you intend to leave the church?"

"Ultimately, yes. I shall have to. It is harder than you imagine—to fail because I succeed. I have to break faith with sacred obligations and dear friends. No one will ever understand but you. And you—oh, you have shown such Christian patience with me, Mr. Warner!"

The elder was not ready to give him up, but a quick tread was coming up stairs and he could only say, "Don't take the first step till I have seen you again, and we have both prayed over it. Good-bye, and God lead you!"

The thin, earnest face of Firestone appeared in the door as the elder went out, and he seemed to fill the room with electricity.

"I couldn't stay away a minute longer. I couldn't resist coming up to rejoice a little over our joint meeting last night—and to apologise for rather taking it

into my hands. I saw at a glance that you were ill. I hope that you're better this morning."

"I am, thank you."

"And we gathered in one soul that is rejoiced over on earth as well as in Heaven. I could have shouted when I saw Silence Garnett coming down the aisle. You forestalled me and went home with her. I hope that you left her in an easier frame of mind."

"I certainly did."

"I hope that she found peace."

"I think so. I had a long talk with her, in which I advised her not to feel that she must obtain salvation through an emotional cataclysm. She is too highly wrought a temperament for that—and there is no need of it."

"But you say that she was converted?"

"According to my belief, yes."

"I hope that she will see her duty clear to devote the service of her talent and life to God. I—I—would like to see her myself, but—she was not down when I called a little while ago. Possibly she gave you some light on her decision."

"She asked my opinion, indirectly, Mr. Firestone, upon the call of duty, and I told her that it must be decided personally, but I also told her that only love could sanction marriage. I don't believe that the work of the Lord will condone a marriage of convenience."

"You did! You took it upon yourself to advise her that?"

"Yes. I advised her to marry you if she loves you,

Mr. Firestone. You have nothing to fear. You would not force a timid, sensitive girl to marry from any other possible motive, would you?"

"I have offered her a great privilege, Mr. Northmore. I have always suspected you of being my rival, now I shall take the matter into my own hands—and I warn you that I will tolerate no more interference. Good-morning."

"Good-bye, Mr. Firestone."

There were wild rumors afloat in Mogadonia all that day, traceable only to the traditional ears of the walls. It might have been to this subtle influence that the suffocating crowd at church that evening was due—a crowd of the very young people whom Northmore had so longed to reach—but it was the magnetism of utter sincerity which held their attention and drew them again, night after night. The youth of a country town are a flock with a leader, and when the leader joined the church one night a little later her followers came solidly in her wake, regardless of parental affiliations. The absence of Divine penology from Northmore's preaching did not prevent his influence from sweeping the town like a contagion, and sending new members into all the other churches.

Once during the early progress of the meeting Mr. Warner brought to Northmore's study one of the leading ministers of the denomination from an Eastern city. It did not occur to the young minister at the time that Dr. Dinwiddie had come for the purpose of a confer-

ence with him, but he never learned of any other possible errand that could have accounted for his presence. The great man gave little time to commonplaces. He went promptly to Northmore's phenomenal success, and then to the wonder of his proposed defection. He had a rich voice, and a beautiful fatherly face with a crown of white hair. Northmore was greatly attracted to him.

"It's a very serious step to take, Mr. Northmore. You must consider with great care what a deplorable effect it will have on your congregation. We preachers are not free agents, you know. Don't under any consideration break your pastoral ties now and undo the good you have done. You can't have any creed so opposed to the one you accepted as that," he begged.

Northmore winced. It was precisely the question upon which he had been desperately wavering for the past ten days.

"I don't see any alternative, Dr. Dinwiddie."

"Our church allows us great latitude of personal interpretation. You needn't refuse to preach because you have individual opinions. We're glad of them—and I speak with authority. Have you realised that your responsibility corresponds with your great power for good or evil?"

"Yes—that is—I don't know!" he groaned miserably. "If it were a matter of mere interpretation—but it's *the* doctrine of the Holy Catholic church which I am ordained to preach. To stay in this pulpit is a daily falsehood."

"Wait a little, brother. We are ahead of our peo-

ple—some of us—and most of us have to keep back a part of our own belief until our congregations grow to it. Try a compromise.”

“When Reason lays hold of a truth, Conscience will not compromise.”

“Not at your age, perhaps,” smiled Dr. Dinwiddie. “Youth is absolute, inexorable, and fond of self-immolation on remote altars. Experience makes one doubt whether anything is absolute, and convinces him that all knowledge is a compromise with tradition. Christ was the greatest compromise of all.”

“That was necessary.”

“Then as now. We ministers are dealing with a ponderous force of vast antiquity. Every thinking man of us deplores certain barbaric survivals in it, but its very hold upon the people prevents our dissecting it with X-ray and lancet. Now, is it better to resign a trust you have assumed with great success, create a sensation which would disrupt your church and do the cause of religion great harm, or to accept a few flaws and do a work that will change the future of your church and have a great effect in uplifting the town? No—don’t decide now. Take time. Think it over well, and over the generous offer for your new edifice.”

“Is that your advice?”

“Many a sincere man is feeding his flock on crumbs until they are ready to digest crusts. I am doing it myself, while our creed is so liberal that Mr. Warner here, a strict literalist of the old school, preaches doctrine undefiled. He calls me a dissenter.”

"But yours are not radical differences. I am eager to do good; I see the great need—but——"

"Then *why don't you do it?*"

"Because I will not preach Divine penology—and I will not permit an unscrupulous man to subsidise my church. We can't sell indulgences in this day."

"But the Church can't take that stand. It would abridge its usefulness immensely. Accept the degree of penitence which the act implies."

"That is the exact issue that I make. Propitiation is not restitution to the wronged ones. The Church rebukes small sins—why not great ones? The fallacy by which we accept an offering to condone business robbery is inconsistent. We must not lay upon our altars offerings to Mammon."

"As old as the race is the material offering of the first fruits."

"Yes, but we are a new age with a new conscience, and we demand a new standard." He turned to the window and added aside: "I am afraid of myself in standing for a new test—afraid that my courage would fail me—for it comes to me in a crucial way personally. Mr. Morgan has been almost my best friend during the winter—he has—his—his family have shown me every courtesy—and now I am put in a position where I must be—false—either to my convictions or—my friends! I can't do either, so I must go away."

Dr. Dinwiddie was a man of large experience, and he read deep behind Northmore's difficult words and long pauses. Then the two old preachers looked at each

other and at the big, virile frame charged with the impetuous force of youth, at the strong chin and stubborn mouth. It was Mr. Warner who spoke:

“Well, well, my dear fellow, you’re going too far! You’ve got to deal with people as they’re created; you can’t get church members made to order. If they were—you and I would be out of work. Try to make them better.”

Northmore smiled hopelessly: “Then you’d have me take the Morgan offer?”

“By all means. It would never occur to me to do anything else. It is without all precedent. And you could do great good with it.”

“It didn’t strike me that that was the question. Is it right to condone legalised robbery by accepting tribute from it?”

Dr. Dinwiddie shook his head hopelessly at Mr. Warner with a queer smile, but neither saw fit to answer as they rose to go. In the afternoon Dr. Dinwiddie went back alone for a last plea. Northmore looked pale and worn with conflict.

“No, I have got to do it. I don’t know why such convictions must seize me when they mean the ruin of my life—all that I hold most precious—but I can’t temporise. It is a square issue. If the Church is to hold as a moral force in the world, it is up to me right now to do this thing.”

“You’re a fanatic, Northmore.”

“The fanatic of one generation is the teacher of the next.”

The doctor went back to Mr. Warner: "My trip was in vain; I have failed," he said. "That man is one of the stiff-necked!"

"Who must butt out their brains to prove there's a wall," finished the other, throwing down his paper impatiently.

"He hasn't butted out his brains, my good friend. He has butted down the wall—though he doesn't know that yet. As the poor fellow says, some man has to raise the issue—and it takes martyr stuff to do it. I didn't deny the truth of his proposition, nor the morality of it. You and I know that it is a bad thing for that church and for a young fellow whom we can't help loving. But fifty years hence—or a good deal less than that—his stand will be the common law of morality."

"You're wrong there, doctor; if there's one thing the Church must do, it's to prop up the old walls and man them," said Mr. Warner positively.

"I don't believe that. The day is almost upon us when there'll be no walls of doctrine—nothing but the eternal law of right and wrong," replied Dr. Dinwiddie.

CHAPTER XVI

THERE was a conceited satisfaction in the swing of Northmore's gait which indexed his mood as he mounted the road to the Ellis cabin on a sunny afternoon in February, reviewing as he walked his psychological history of the past months, now that it had become history by his formal resignation and the appointment of a successor. He had carried his meeting to a brilliant finish and had stood firm in his conviction despite the temptations to reconsider which had assailed him. Better than all this, and he gloated upon it with secret triumph, he had torn from his heart the unbidden love that was rooted there; he had reached a point where the image of a lovely face was not always present in his consciousness. He could now exorcise it at will by quoting a remembered passage or poem or plunging deep into a metaphysical problem. He had proved how completely a man of any strength of character can become master of himself, and he was a bit proud of the conquest. It would not have been necessary so ruthlessly to burn his bridges behind him for his own sake.

The train of thought absorbed him so entirely that he was surprised to find himself almost at the cabin, which he had been obliged to neglect during the rush of the winter's work, though he had known through the bul-

letin of daily news at Mrs. Jernigan's table that Mrs. Ellis was provided for until within a few days. This morning, however, it had been announced that she was worse, was destitute again, and was to be removed to the county infirmary the next day; hence he was hurrying up to verify the report and to see what could be done for her.

The memory of the first time he had gone up that road, with the bright presence at his side that had grown so dear, recurred to him vividly, but he dismissed it with cold stoicism, at least he was engaged in so disposing of it when his heart gave a plunge that choked him and then stood still; his face grew hot and then pale; his pulses hammered deafeningly in his ears, and all at the sight of a small run-about and a slim black horse tied at the gate of the Ellis cabin. For one moment he stood irresolute, and then at a swift thought he sprang forward with protective instinct. The one restraint he had imposed upon his action regarding Mr. Morgan's gift had been the shielding of his daughter from all painful knowledge that might lead her to judge her father. Now she was probably alone with Mrs. Ellis, and he knew the revelation that would be made unless he was in time to prevent it. He knocked sharply at the door, which was immediately opened—by Florida Morgan.

"Oh, Mr. Northmore, I am so glad you have come!" she cried, giving him her hand with the old friendliness. "I have heard such things about you—and now you are going to tell me that they are not true."

"That depends. I didn't know that you had returned. When did you get home?" He was looking around for a place to deposit his hat and coat and found a nail on the back door that served. He turned back as she answered:

"Only yesterday. I had to take a hack over from Bellevue because the limited doesn't stop at this station, and the driver, who used to work in the grounds, told me that Mr. Ellis died last fall and—that Mrs. Ellis was very ill, so I came right over to-day. Father is not at home, and I knew that he would not hear of her—being moved from her house. Mr. Ellis used to work for father at the little factory a long time ago, when he knew all the men personally, and I know he was a great favourite. He stopped work for some reason, and we lost sight of him entirely until the day that you and I found them by chance, that day last fall. I used to go to school with Bessie Ellis—she was the brightest girl in the class. I am so glad you have come to tell me what to do about the situation."

"How long have you been here?" was his irrelevant question as he stood by the bed with Mrs. Ellis's skeleton hand in his and her eyes fixed upon him with a dangerous expression.

"I have just come. I was telling her who I am when you knocked. You remember me now, don't you, Mrs. Ellis? You are not to be taken away to-morrow. You are going to stay right in your home as long as you want to, and your friends are not going to let you be

troubled about anything. You must have someone to stay in the house regularly and take care of you; that is the first thing to be attended to. Do you know someone that you would like? ”

The woman raised her ghost of a body on the pillow and her sunken eyes brightened: “Who’s goin’ to pay for anything?” she demanded in a bronchial whisper.

“Don’t worry about that. You have friends who will be glad to look after such things.”

“They’ve ben a long time comin’,” she gasped. “I want to know who’s goin’ to pay anything now.”

Florida bent over and took the hand that Northmore had released: “I am, Mary. I can hardly bear to think of all that you must have needed in the past, but from this time you shall have everything you want. I will see to it myself until father gets home, and I know he will make a permanent provision for you. You know how good and kind father is, Mary, and he will be grieved to know that you have needed anything. He hasn’t known about it.”

The tone was so sympathetic and the girl’s presence so gentle that it appeared impossible to resent her charity, but Northmore saw the sick woman gather her strength as if for a spring, and he edged Florida away from the bed with his arm and interposed quickly:

“I believe that the best thing you can do, Miss Morgan, is to drive down and send Mrs. Jernigan up at once. The case seems to be urgent, and she will know much better than either of us what is needed and how to get it.”

"That's true," assented Florida. "We are tiring her out with talk when there are things to do. I'll try to make her comfortable before I go—and you may fix up the fire. It is dreadfully cold in here. I'll make her a cup of tea," and she opened the door into the other room. Northmore suspected that it was no use to look for coal, but he took up the old basket which evidently served for a hod and went out. There was not even a chip in the shed. Florida returned from her search with a horrified face, while Mrs. Ellis tried so eagerly to speak to her that she fell into a fit of coughing. The girl tenderly wrapped the bedclothes about her and held her until she lay back exhausted. There was literally nothing to give her but a drink of water in a broken teacup.

"Oh, you poor dear! By this time to-morrow you will be so comfortable, and you shall never again be neglected. Oh, you poor, poor sufferer!" whispered the girl with tears on her cheeks while she tenderly patted the wasted hands. "Now, Mr. Northmore, won't you please get to the nearest telephone and order—just order everything—as fast as you can. Get a load of coal first—have them rush it up to-night—and provisions—tea, and—well, just everything. I can't think what to begin with—fruit and wine and jelly—and some pretty, soft blankets——"

"Who's goin' to pay for 'em?" demanded the sick woman's hoarse whisper again, "I ain't got a cent."

"It will be my privilege to do it, Mary," said Florida, patting and smoothing her shoulders.

"No, you won't! No, you won't!" cried Mrs. Ellis in an unearthly voice, twitching away from the caressing hands. "I'm goin' to the poorhouse, where I belong. You ain't goin' to buy nothing for me. I'll die as hard as my child died, and my husband, without a bite to eat when the death hunger came. I don't blame you, Florida, you was a sweet little girl, and it was never your fault, but my man never took a cent that came from Tom Morgan, and I won't, either."

"Go after Mrs. Jernigan at once," commanded Northmore, drawing the girl away in an agony of apprehension. "I will stay here and—make it all right. It has been a long siege and she is embittered. Go at once; the house is growing colder." He gave her her gloves and opened the door.

"You will stay here till I get back?" she asked as he helped her into the runabout and handed her the reins.

"Yes, indeed."

"I shall not be long. You coax her up; she is out of her head, poor creature," and she was off, her horse sliding and splashing down the muddy road, upon which the last trace of snow had thawed. Northmore returned to the room and busied himself getting materials for a fire from the next house, and making it. He put water to heat, knowing that it would be needed when Florida returned. As soon as he had got the room fairly warm he went to the sick woman's side to try to reconcile her to acceptance, but she had fallen asleep and he would not wake her. In a very short time Florida returned with a basket of the things most urgently needed.

"I wouldn't let her talk at all if it can be prevented," he suggested nervously as he helped her out. "She will only exhaust herself and she is hardly sane."

"No, she must be kept quiet," the girl assented.

The kettle was boiling on the one stove which served for all purposes when they went in, and the two at once set about making toast and tea, which they finally achieved without disaster in their lack of skill.

"I went to Mrs. Jernigan as you suggested, and she told me what to get. I wanted her to come right up with me, but she said that she would go after a woman to stay all night and come up later herself," whispered Florida, her eyes on the sleeper.

"Then all will go well if you have put her into Mrs. Jernigan's hands," and there was relief in Northmore's voice. "You need not even stay until she comes. I will see that Mrs. Ellis has her tea when she wakes up."

Florida turned upon him: "Why are you in such haste to send me off? I propose to stay until help comes, and then you are going to drive me home. It will be growing dark by that time and the road from here across to the pike is almost impassable. You have to give an account of yourself. I have not had a moment to ask you if you actually are going to leave Mogadonia. I have heard some ridiculous rumors about it."

He smiled, but did not answer. It was not easy to tell her. A neighbour came in presently, and Northmore took the occasion to propose going. The woman was the one who had taken charge of the Ellises for years, as he knew. Florida protested a little, but finally

consented, saying that she would come again in the morning, when supplies would have arrived and she could be of greater use. He hurried her out to the runabout as the sick woman opened her eyes and the neighbour went to her with the tea.

"Now, aren't you going to tell me all about it?" she asked as soon as they were tucked up in the laprobe. "Who started the rumor that you are leaving Mogadonia?"

"It is true."

"No-o!" The soft little cry of consternation unnerved him. He was trying to steel himself to her presence.

"It is true."

"What can it mean? The whole place is ringing with your praise. Nothing like your work has ever been known here before."

He was guiding the horse over a bad curve and made no reply.

"You will at least tell me that it is not a calamity which takes you away unwillingly," she insisted after a pause. "Something of the kind was suggested—and you will take me into your confidence to that extent, won't you?"

"I am going as quietly as possible on account of my church. I don't want sensational reports to unsettle the people who have come in during the winter. My father died recently and my mother wishes me to close up his business. That is one reason. There is another which is purely personal."

“Ah! But you haven’t yet revealed what I want to know—your own part in it. Your place here can never be filled by anyone else; you are leaving before you have crystallised yourself into a permanent effect. It is a great pity, and I can’t tell whether something sordid, some need of others—of your mother’s—is taking you, as I suspect, or whether you are going of your own wish—which I don’t believe. It would be wrong to allow a mere business matter to break up your future; it would be a sacrifice that your—friends—could not allow.”

The diffidence of her tone showed how much more she would like to say if she dared. Northmore’s senses were reeling at the best. A wave of regret had washed away all his high resolve, all his self-righteous arrogance of the early afternoon. He only knew that he was sitting beside the one woman—that his coatsleeve touched hers, that physically they were so near that his arm could encircle her, though practically separated by a hemisphere of circumstance. They had driven through town and out upon the pike to Heathermuir, across which the shadow of the hills was now falling. He could see with a side glance the lovely curve of her cheek above the high collar of her fur coat, and the soft loose rings of hair that drooped upon her forehead. He could divine what was going on in her mind; sympathy for the supposed financial stress which made it necessary for him to break from his calling, and a desire to remove it out of the abundance which so oppressed her—checkmated by the impossibility of offering it.

Yes, out of her pure goodness and unselfishness she was taking his affairs to heart and longing to help him. What would she think if she knew the storm of love that was raging in his heart? She must not know, that was all! The plunk-plunk of the horse's feet upon the bridge roused her from the puzzled revery into which she had fallen:

"That is the place where I was marooned the day you found and rescued me; how long ago it seems!"

She bent forward to look down into the full yellow torrent that swept high under the bridge and lashed the rim of the bank.

"We have lived some since then," he said gravely.

She looked up quickly into his face. "Yes. It is such a little while, and yet I seem to have known you so long; I knew you the moment I saw you. Wasn't it strange? We were old acquaintances instantly. And you understood me without words, and helped me. Oh, I had planned such things to do with you! Olive Drysdale has fairly spent the winter in studying the city philanthropies with me. She said you could accomplish anything you undertook, you had such an executive quality. I have come home full of her ideas and of enthusiasm—and now it is all useless. We were great friends before I left, and now you are so lofty you won't let me help you in your trouble at all."

"That would be weakness," he managed to say, adding before she found an answer, "As for help, you can have the best co-operation. Miss Garnett told me that she had written to you of her engagement."

"Yes, she wrote a lovely letter. She is very happy; I was quite taken with Mr. Harrington last fall, and you may guess how glad I was to know that it wasn't Africa." She laughed reminiscently: "You wouldn't marry her yourself to please me, but you did the next best thing."

"You will find her full of enthusiasm in the plans you have for Mogadonia, with an able lieutenant in Mr. Harrington. And there is always Mrs. Jernigan."

They rounded a curve of the road and the thick red of the winter sunset illuminated two faces which revealed more than their light words were saying. Another turn carried them into the cut between two hills, from whose thawing moisture came down the first faint scent of the spring. In the gloom of the evening the bare twigs of the woods showed only in a purple haze about the tree trunks. The two in the runabout were silent with crowding thought which would not form itself to adequate speech in the fleeting moments before they reached the house.

"You must come in," said Florida imperatively, as he helped her out under the porte-cochère. "Oh, yes, yes. I will take no excuse. You can telephone to Susan. It may be the last time, you know, and there are many plans about which you must advise me. After dinner I will send you home in a carriage."

It appeared to him that there was no way out of it; it was far easier to yield to temptation under the inevitable than voluntarily.

The dinner was quiet, for Mr. Morgan was out of

town, and Mrs. Morgan essayed only a few difficult attempts at conversation, leaving Florida to talk of the schemes she had developed under Olive Drysdale's supervision during the winter. Afterward her mother excused herself and Florida led her guest to a little soft-hued room in which a wood fire was cheerily snapping.

"Now," she said when she had ensconced him in a deep chair, "you are going to remember what old friends we are, and take me into your confidence. I know very well that you haven't told me the true reason for giving up your dear work. I know that it must be almost a tragic one—and yet—it may be something that—that it would be a great privilege to avert—if—if you would allow your friends such a pleasure. And you are not unkind."

He saw how much it cost her to try to penetrate his reserve. She was sitting opposite on a low seat with the firelight playing exquisitely over her sensitive face. His own flushed hotly.

"It is not so bad as that, Miss Morgan. It is not a—a financial difficulty that influences me. It is something more vital than that—and I think I must tell you. I have gone over it again and again, night and day, in the last few months. It is a matter of doctrine, of belief. I can no longer preach in an orthodox church. It has been as hard to break my ties as human action could be—and I beg you not to add to the difficulty. Don't disapprove, please. I couldn't stand it."

"But I shall. Mr. Northmore, is that *all*? Oh, I

am so glad. I was afraid it might be something serious; why didn't you tell me in the first place—and not let me worry? What is it—something about baptism?"

"It would take a long time to tell you."

"But you needn't leave your church on that account. People have all sorts of differences now, and all the churches are growing so near that they are merely the different colleges of a great university. Why, Olive is an Episcopalian and I am a Baptist, and for our lives we couldn't tell the difference in our religion."

"But, you see, I was pledged to preach the tenets of my own church, and I have no right to introduce what would be heresy there. It cannot be helped now, Miss Morgan, and when I am sane I am glad I had firmness enough to do it."

"And you are going to preach in some other church?"

"I don't know what I am going to do. I am utterly adrift."

"That is impossible! When you have such ability—and there is so much to do! I saw sights in the city that will haunt me forever. I feel like climbing stone stairs on my knees to atone for living in unnecessary luxury when there is such awful misery! You see I have a lot of time here to think about these things—and Olive is giving herself up more and more to her charities. Why can't you—go into some of them—for a mission?"

She had drawn closer in her enthusiasm and her voice was sweeter than anything he had ever heard.

He was holding the arms of his chair with rigid hands, and the power of speech appeared to have left him. He turned his gaze to the fire.

“You see you haven’t the ghost of a reason,” she laughed, leaning forward, with luminous eyes. She was wonderfully beautiful in the pink light, while the wistful persuasiveness in her voice told unsaid things. “Isn’t it a duty to use a large talent for the good of others—and to help stupid people to use their—good intentions for the same purpose? You—you—are taking away my usefulness as well—don’t you see? We could do so much—working togeth—working in harmony.”

He did not answer for a long minute or two, in which the fire hummed cosily. His voice was hard with the effort to speak when he said: “Even a priest may have some manhood; there are conditions which he may not accept; some vestige of dignity must assert itself. Please remember that I am very human—and don’t make it too hard for me!”

“I don’t understand. Why must it be—if it is hard? A minister does not take monastic vows and fast away his strength in these days. He works and—helps other people to work.”

He did not know how to reply; he did not understand what hope of usefulness might be veiled under her words; he only knew that every other consideration was for him swept away by her gentle, womanly, irresistible sweetness.

“That is what you don’t know, Miss Morgan. There

was never a time when a priest must so completely efface self as now. He must not only accept perpetual poverty like a monk, but the monk's abject position in the world's thought. He must renounce—the—dearest—object of life, must be humiliated while his soul is torn asunder."

The difficult words would hardly come, under her gaze. He looked into the fire, while the room was so still that he could hear her soft, near breathing. The tension was intolerable; he sprang to his feet. "I can't bear it—and I can't tell you!" he burst forth furiously. "You can't see how I am fettered. I am more fully bound than ever to God's work in a new way; I have thrown away my chance to win recognition in the world as a free man might; I hoped to get away without—telling you—what a fool I am—without seeing you again! I am not permitted to—if my consecration means anything, it means a monk's celibacy, and yet—I have been fool enough to—send me away, please, this moment." He was collected now. "I hope that you don't see what it means to me. I am going before I commit worse folly. Don't—" he lifted a negative hand—"don't let me stay any longer."

She was instantly on her feet, cool, self-possessed, graceful.

"Oh, no, I am not detaining you—since you are—the only person to be considered. Thank you for your protection home." Her voice was clear as a bell, with an indignant ring in it. He stood stupidly before her for a few seconds trying to take in, through his tur-

bulent senses, something in her tone that was unexpected, but he could not make it out. In the cushioned seat of the carriage he sank back wearily and wished that the spirited horses might plunge him into the swollen stream. In the middle of the night, as he sat in burning self-damnation before the ashes, a lightning flash of comprehension cleft his brain—and he understood. “*Since you are the only person to be considered!*”—was what he saw illuminated. He opened his window; he was suffocating in the cold room. Was *that* it? Across the gulf of his boundless stupidity she had thrown her favour to him—to her Sir Knight. And he—what had he done? Could he go away now without seeing her again, with the thrill of those words in his pulses? Had he so much manhood left? He would prove it. He slept at last, fitfully, with the red of the winter dawn upon his face, then he was up for a new day, a white stone day in his life. But he must still be strong enough to go away!

After breakfast he heard Mrs. Jernigan at the telephone. “Yes, yes, this is her.—Oh, is that you, Florida?—Yes, I left a woman stayin’ with her last night; she picked up and eat quite a supper.—Yes, the Old Doctor’s goin’ to see her—always has.—He thinks not—no longer than spring—though he says you can’t tell in those long cases. It may be years.—Yes, everything ’ll be delivered this mornin’.—Why, I don’t know ’bout that, I’m sure. I ’spose they ought to be notified not to take her; if you think there’s any danger of that, I’ll go up right away and stay. They won’t get

her if I'm there—don't you worry.—Yes, she is mighty comfortable; it's a great change.—Yes, yes, there's enough for the present.—Oh, don't mention it. Good-bye, Florida.”

She came out to Northmore. “Florida is worried for fear the poorhouse authorities don't understand and will take Mary Ellis away this mornin'. I guess nobody thought to notify 'em last night. What do you think we'd better do about it?”

“I will attend to it myself,” he said, and went out at once. There was a tang of frost in the air and the mud was crusted as he went through Whisky Island up to the spur. The miners' houses looked more unlike human habitations now than when he had first seen them under the glow of autumn sun and haze. These were the people whom he had not been able to help—the ones who needed help most. He wondered, as he saw the load of coal that had been dumped at the Ellis shed, why the comforts of life must be obtained at such a cost to the workers themselves. Did not the production of coal pay enough to provide its miners with something better than kennels after their hard work?

He found a competent woman brightening the sick room with housewifely skill, and the materials which had been sent to her. The patient watched her with fever-bright eyes, her thin electric hair crowning her wasted face in a white wreath. A tray of untasted breakfast stood beside the bed. He went with a friendly greeting, and talked to her for a moment, leading the way to speak of Florida and persuade her to accept the girl's

kindness. Before he could accomplish this, however, he was conscious of a subtle presence at his side, of faintly fragrant garments that brushed his, and he turned to say "good-morning" to Florida herself, while the colour went out of his face.

"Good-morning, Mr. Northmore." She was perfectly self-possessed. Then he had misunderstood! His heart seemed to stop beating at the thought—yet it was better so—far better. Why should he care so desperately?

"I think you look better this morning, Mary," said the girl brightly. "I was so afraid that you would be carried off in spite of us, that I drove over like mad. Well, we can all hold the fort, surely."

The woman was stronger than the day before. She lifted her wild face from the pillow and looked fiercely at Florida. "I hope I ain't better, and I'm goin' to the poorhouse to-day—if I have to walk. Why shouldn't I? If I'm charity, I can get my rights off the town, I guess, without all this fuss."

"No, no, now, Mary, you are just going to be good and let us do what we like. Don't put your arms out like that, it's none too warm here. Have you had your breakfast?"

The soft voice roused the woman to fury. "No, nor I won't eat it. I tole you yisterday, Florida Morgan, that I wouldn't take a cent of your'n, an' I won't. I can't get up to put you out of the house, but I kin keep from eatin' your victuals—and I have!"

Northmore drew Florida away as he had done the day

before. "You had better not stay. She excites herself needlessly; she is hardly responsible," he whispered.

"But it must be a mistake. She has taken me for someone else. She can't have anything against *me*," urged the girl.

"Of course not, but it troubles her, nevertheless. You had better go!"

"No, indeed. I shall straighten it out and put her at ease." She threw off his detaining hand and went to the bedside again. "Mary, you ought to be scolded for not knowing me. I am Florida Morgan; you must remember me, even if I was gone a long time. I am sure that father lost sight of you, too, or he would never have let you see hard times. Mr. Ellis was one of the best men he ever had—in the old days. Now, you are going to be good to me, aren't you?"

The woman searched her face with curious eyes. "Is that all you know?" she demanded. Northmore, behind the girl, was imploring silence in frantic pantomime, but she would not heed him.

"If I had known, don't you think I would have been here long ago, Mary? We owe you too much for your husband's faithful service."

The last words were enough. Vivid colour flew through the woman's transparent skin. "Owe us! Owe us! Yes, you pay what you owe us and I'll give *you* a bit of charity now and then. You'll need a meal sometimes. If you don't know how your father robbed us, it's time you did. Where did he get his riches? You tell me that, Florida Morgan. Ask your father

why my man was laid off to starve when he hurt his hand. He can tell you!" she screamed.

The girls' face was colourless. She waved Northmore off and looked at the speaker with apprehensive fear. "You must tell me what you mean, Mary. I don't know why Ellis stopped working for father, but I know that it must have been through a mistake. My father is a good, kind man; he never wronged anybody willingly."

"Oh, didn't he, though? So he's lied to you about it all these years, has he? You ask Tom Morgan who invented his first patent. Ask him how he come to get it."

"Tell me, Mary. I'm not afraid to hear of any deed of my father's. He is a Christian gentleman, as everybody knows," and she lifted her head proudly, though her voice trembled.

"Listen to me, Florida, and don't let the preacher drag you off. I want to tell you; it's worth all the years I've laid here to be the one to tell Tom Morgan's daughter that he sets such store by. Oh, there's a turn in the lane if you go far enough! Listen, Florida; it was Ellis invented that first machine that made all the money—my man that died hungry. He worked on it night and mornin' for fifteen years. He put his heart and soul into it. When did Tom Morgan ever invent anything? He never had a new idea in his life. And my poor man worked at it nights after his day in the shop till, many a time, I've got up and waked him, settin' with the tools in his hands, and Sundays he'd hardly

stop to eat, while Tom Morgan was sayin' his prayers in church. Then I had my trouble just when he got it to runnin' and we'd scraped enough together for the patent, and we had to have money quick. Ellis went to your pa to borrow some, but not a cent would he lend! Not a cent after fifteen years of honest work. Then Ellis showed him the model and asked for a loan on that. No, not a cent, and he knew it meant life and death to us. But he wanted to buy it the minute he laid eyes on it, and he never let up. We either had to sell it to him or die and let him steal it. And he got it."

"But he bought it! He paid for it!" cried the girl with stiffening lips.

"Paid for it! He took it—and gave Ellis *two hundred and fifty dollars* for it. Two hundred and fifty dollars—and made millions and millions out of it. It wasn't as if we'd offered to sell it. He made us give it up. Not a cent of Tom Morgan's stolen money 'll ever feed me! And I'll die glad and happy that I lived to tell it to you, when he's kept it secret all these years—and you called him a Christian! Not that you're like him, Florida," noting for the first the anguish in the girl's white face, "you was always a good little thing, dividin' your candy with Bessie, and never knowin' the difference between rich and poor."

Florida could not speak. Unnumbered forgotten bits of proof corroborated the truth of Mrs. Ellis's story. She knelt by the bed and, putting her arms about the wasted form, drew the white head to her shoulder with infinite gentleness. Northmore turned

away. At last she said, shaken by a great dry sob, "Oh, Mary! Oh, Mary! It couldn't be—quite so bad! Tell me."

The woman was silent, close in the girl's arms. The soft hand stroked her wild hair. "Bessie was nearly my age—and she is not here. For her sake you will let me stay and—love you. Little Bessie!"

"Oh, Bessie, Bessie, my baby!" sobbed the woman, her anger gone, while tears came to both as they clung together. Northmore, with his back to the two, stared out of the window. After a while Florida called him back. She was taking off her hat and jacket.

"If you have pencil and paper with you, please make a list of things that I want from home. I am going to stay here."

CHAPTER XVII

It was a sunny Sabbath morning in the last of February on which Northmore entered his pulpit for the last time to confront such a congregation as had never been able to crowd into the church before. Every person was there who had had the least part in his short and strenuous pastorate. Joe Fury occupied a prominent seat. Billy Canter found a place where he could look at Florida Morgan's back hair, having hopelessly lost his heart to her on the occasion of the Thanksgiving dinner, at which he was one of the superfluous waiters. Firestone's reproachful face was turned to him from beside Miss Libby Ann Munson, a middle-aged teacher, who was beginning to show a keen interest in Abyssinian missions. Miss Libby Ann was plain and commonplace, but she was good and sincere and blessed with an iron constitution.

Northmore had chosen for the morning lesson part of the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew as the best exposition of his action that could be given, and for his text, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my father which is in heaven."

"The great cry of the day is for ministers," he began, "ministers not merely to talk in pulpits, but to do Christianity in the world of action. It is now de-

manded that we apply our precepts in business, that we work out our self-redemption in the eyes of men—not their ears. It is required that we share the world-burden of poverty and suffering to the extent of our individual ability.”

This was his only explanation of the step he had taken. In the intense quiet every word went home to the listeners. At the close of the sermon he moved to the side of the pulpit and in one subdued, impersonal sentence indicated that he was to sever a sacred relation most dear to him, and asked for his successor the support that had been accorded to himself. His restrained voice revealed no emotion; he was amazed at the wave of sorrow that his words evoked in the congregation. He did not read the last hymn quite steadily, wondering, too, for the thousandth time, if he were right in letting go a personal grip upon people which could be used to such good for them.

It took him a long time after the benediction was pronounced to make his way down the aisle to the door.

The man in whose face he read the heartiest endorsement was Quiggins, his first Mogadonia acquaintance, who pressed forward and clung to his hand, reluctant to part. There was even a sprinkling of the English-speaking people from Whisky Island, who had first heard him preach Ellis's funeral sermon. Many were waiting at the door when he came out, and all the leading members invited him home to dinner.

He dressed by gaslight the next morning in his denuded room, and stole downstairs to avoid routing the

family at the early hour, but the precaution was wasted. The entire Jernigan contingent waylaid him in the hall and carried him to the dining-room, where the last of Mrs. Jernigan's good breakfasts smoked for him. Her face was very red, and she remarked as she bent low over the coffeepot that "a body with a floral complexion got het up so broilin' steak that it was a sight to see 'em." Her voice was catchy and she was in that feminine need of consolation which expends itself in garrulity.

"I tell him I'm jest disgusted with this ole moss-back town that's so married to its idols that it freezes out every smart man that strikes it. I was afraid that Mr. Harrington 'd be the next to go an' leave Joe Fury in full possession, draggin' our boys full tilt to ruin, but things has taken a sudden turn an' it looks like Joe Fury was gettin' the worst of it. All the decent trade's turned to Mr. Harrington."

"I don't see how you argue that Mr. Northmore's ben froze out. I kin prove you wrong there——" began the oracle.

"You don't need to, pa. I only mean that the town itself is too slow fur him. I hope the chillern of this town won't be on yore head, Mr. Northmore, fur no livin' man kin ever take yore place with them," she said earnestly.

"Don't speak of that, please," begged the young man, his eyes full of pain. "I'm going to try to keep track of some of them after I'm gone. It's the best I can do."

“Wall, if all the other smart folks lights out, you bet we ain’t goin’ to stay. Do you reckon any other place would let a man with the wisdom of Joseph Jernigan live in it for forty years and pay no more ’tention to him than if he was a locust post taken root? I’ve told him he wasn’t appreciated here many and many a time.” Which Mr. Jernigan was more than ready to corroborate, though his pancakes were cooling.

The station lights were blinking in the frosty dawn as Northmore climbed desolately to the mid-air platform upon which he had landed so confidently only a few months before. He was surprised to find a group of men waiting at that uncanny hour to see him off. He had felt it a high compliment that Mr. Jernigan shortened his hours of arduous rest to do him honour, but here at the train were Mr. Harrington, Mr. Money-penny, Billy Canter, and, to his surprise, Mr. Firestone, and twenty or more others. Billy Canter drew him aside confidentially.

“I wanted to ask your advice on a delicate subject. I—I’ve been thinking a great deal lately about a—young lady. I have, indeed. And she’s such a beautiful young lady, and so good and so friendly—why, she said, ‘I’ll never forget your kindness, Mr. Canter, in helping us out with our Thanksgiving dinner.’ And she shook hands with me! Now, what do you think of that? I’d have been out to call on her, only she’s been away nearly all winter, but last Sunday after church I stood round by her carriage and she said, ‘How do you do, Mr. Canter?’ just as pleasant

as anything. And she's known me all her life. And, as you know, Mr. Northmore, I'm a church member, and I never smoked a cigarette in my life, and I'm a business man of some means—nothing to compare with hers, of course, but it's a bad year when I don't come out seven or eight hundred dollars ahead. Now, wouldn't you think my chances pretty good—if there ain't anybody else? ”

Northmore smiled. “That's a question that the wisest of us can't answer, Mr. Canter. We all have to leave it to the lady.”

Then he was hurrying along the platform shaking hands with his friends, for the great yellow eye of the locomotive was gleaming out of the tunnel and making the scene as unreal as a tableau.

“Good-bye, Mr. Jernigan. Good-bye, Mr. Money-penny; yes, I will write occasionally,”—then he was gliding smoothly among them on the lower step of the car, lifting his hat to them as the train rounded the curve and went out of sight. Then he settled himself in the coach, hot and dusty from its night run from Baltimore, and looked down upon the black roofs of the town where this paradoxical chapter of successful failure had been closed.

The train plunged into the eastern tunnel under old Whiteface and he leaned back in the noxious darkness, wondering if he were done forever with Mogadonia—and with its one beautiful, heartbreaking face, that would not leave his vision. With what effort was he

now to build out the broken shaft of his life purpose to make it worthy tribute to her who must henceforth be the unconscious mainspring of his motive? Must the next shaft also be modelled with bleeding hands only to shatter under the grinding abrasion of his passion to know and live Truth?

CHAPTER XVIII

A DAY or two before Northmore left, two passengers landed from the noon accommodation, who had come to fill his dual vacancy. A stout man with reddish moustache and important bearing strode down from the platform and took the hack up to Mrs. Garnett's to report as the new manager of the pottery, while a slender, blond young fellow, with wavy light hair and the face of an angel, delivered himself to Mr. Moneypenny's charge as the new minister.

Paul Brand had known his predecessor slightly at the Seminary, but they were so unlike that they had never been attracted to stronger friendship. Their very difference of type was now to Brand's advantage, as it would bring him less into comparison with Northmore, whose popularity was too great to be inherited by a man who was like him. Brand's sweetness and spirituality, in opposition to Northmore's practical ideals, found the soil prepared for their sowing, and the new pastor was liked at first sight.

The manager took charge of the works after two nominal conferences with Mrs. Garnett, in which he listened with curt patience to her complicated and minute details of policy. It was apparent before the close of the first week that he had a method of his own, a rigorous one, which accomplished results, as there had been a rush of orders and the season was a busy one.

With the advance of spring an activity without precedent took possession of Mogadonia. The pretty island encircled by the river at the foot of Old White-face began to undergo a mysterious transformation, fascinating to the young people whose summers had held no more elaborate junketings than the annual picnics to the Raven Rocks. Cattle which had peacefully grazed there for time unknown were deposed, and building material was dumped from an unending procession of waggons. This first took shape in a handsome bridge, and then rose in airy pavilions and booths among the trees, while the undergrowth was replaced by elaborate landscape gardening. It then developed that Joe Fury was making a resort park of the place, and its progress was watched with delight by the young and alarm by their parents.

Tom Morgan's offer to all the churches was a reality, and those which had accepted were working heroically to raise their quota in the specified time. Their suppers, fairs, and innumerable original devices so drained the town of vest-pocket change that Brand, who was now considering with his members the reopened question of acceptance, wondered if anything could be left for them to do in their own behalf. He thought it a magnificent offer, and failed to understand how anyone could hesitate about it. He had been invited to Mr. Morgan's to talk over the matter, and was taken by storm by the latter's zeal, piety, his austere morality, and the broad spirit which led him to be generous to other denominations.

A vapoury rumour, long in the air, condensed about this time into the authoritative announcement of Morgan's candidacy for congressional honours.

Paul Brand, learning this first from Mrs. Garnett, whom he was consulting about ways and means of raising the necessary fund to secure the Morgan donation, was enthusiastic in his endorsement of the candidate.

"He's just the sort of man that we want at the front. We've been represented by men who made their religion almost a secret. Their loose lives have been a shameful example to the people. Now we want a powerful Christian in that office—and we're going to do our best to elect him."

"Yes," and Mrs. Garnett thoughtfully smoothed her black-bordered handkerchief over her knee. "I like your liberality in being willing to endorse a man of another denomination. It repays his liberality to us in the same way."

"Yes, and that liberality is something that we must make sure of. How are we going to raise that money, Mrs. Garnett?"

"As the others are doing, I suppose, after we have given all that we can ourselves. There's a personal matter that I've wanted to consult you about at the first opportunity. May I speak of it now?"

"Certainly."

"You know, I think, that my husband died very suddenly last winter, and he left one unfinished thing. He had set apart ten thousand dollars in a separate

fund to build something for his men at the pottery and for the other people in the New Town over there, Now, I feel that I must use that money in carrying out his wish. He had quite set his heart on it—but the Lord interfered with his intention. Why, I don't know. What do you think I ought to do with that money, Mr. Brand?"

"I think that you ought to carry out your husband's intentions."

"But I can't do it. I don't know what it was. He never talked to anyone about it. My husband and I had different ideas on the subject, and he never gave me the details."

"Then, I should say, you will have to do the next best thing. Devote it to some object of which he would approve."

"I am wondering if it would be right to devote it to an object of which he would not approve. He was very good to his men in every way but one, he never used his great influence with them for their spiritual welfare. Now, since I am their employer, I want to supply that deficiency as far as possible. I want to give every hour of my future life to God's work. And I think the best use of that money will be in a chapel building right at the works. The men would surely attend it then."

"But we are building three other churches in this town at the same time. It would have to be a union chapel, and they are never successful. Don't you feel that you could contribute it to the fund we must raise? It would go a long way toward that?"

"No. Though I should love to add it to our fund, I know my husband would not have done that. I must use it in a special way."

"I see. And he left no plan?"

"None whatever. I hoped that my daughter knew something about it, but she is as ignorant as I am. You are aware that he did not even leave a will?" There was a note of censure in his voice.

"Indeed!" Then as an idea struck him, "Why not try the men a little first? If they respond, the chapel will be the thing. I've known a business men's noon prayer meeting to be attended with success. Why not try one there?"

"That's the very suggestion I've been looking for—a workingmen's prayer meeting! That will lead right up to the chapel, and induce them to go to church for his sake. I will try to introduce it at once—if you will conduct it a few times."

"Certainly."

Before he left, Mrs. Garnett assured Brand of a liberal subscription to her own church, and he went away in great enthusiasm, springing joyously over the pavement in the warm April air and seeing the spires of his new sanctuary already piercing the blue of the deep sky.

On the same evening a deputation of workmen called upon Mrs. Garnett to present a list of grievances. She had never before dealt directly with the men, though she was anxious to assume something of her husband's personal relation with them, and she was now full of mis-

sionary zeal, inspired by her wish to do them good. She looked upon this timely visit as an opening. The spokesman stated his errand, to which she listened without interest, waiting for an opportunity to introduce her own topic.

"It is impossible for me to do anything for you in that way, Mr. Hicks. You know I have put the management entirely into the hands of the superintendent, and I can't interfere. You will have to make complaints to him. I hope you won't make them without cause, either. You can never expect anyone else to be as easy with you as Mr. Garnett was," she said with an apparent sternness, which was really embarrassment in the new situation.

"It's not so much a complaint as that we'd like things left as near Mr. Garnett's way as they can be. That's the reason we came to you. He gave us some little specialties that we're used to. We don't mind the new man's shaves so much as we do the little things."

"What are they?"

"Well, for one thing, you know Mr. Garnett wanted us all to go home and get a warm dinner, and he added ten minutes to the noon hour to give the farthest men time. The whistle always blew ten minutes early—and he never lost that time, I can tell you! Then if we got back early, there was always the wash room in order and the reading room with papers and magazines. Now, Mr. Brown has taken off the extra time and stopped the reading matter. This morning there was a notice posted that after this we must bring our own

soap and towels. We don't mind that, but the little privileges do make a difference."

Mrs. Garnett was troubled. She had told the new manager that she wanted expenses cut as low as possible, to enable her to give liberally to the church fund—but she had not wanted this. She reflected a moment.

"I can't interfere with the management, Mr. Hicks, but I surely can ask a favour. I'll tell you what I had already planned to do before you came. I'm thinking of building a chapel for you people over the spur, and as a preliminary I want to introduce something that I hope you will like—and accept for Mr. Garnett's sake. We have all had such a warning of the insecurity of life that I want you to give a little time to religious thought. I will ask Mr. Brown to give you back that ten minutes for a little noon prayer meeting."

"A prayer meeting!" exclaimed Hicks, bewildered.

"Yes, right in the works, to help you through the day. My minister will come over and conduct it for you at first, and afterwards you can appoint one of yourselves."

"Oh, I see. Yes, thank you, Mrs. Garnett. I'll tell the men how you feel about it, and they won't mind going—and we're obliged to you. We'd do it for his sake any day. I'll tell the men how you're fixed about Mr. Brown, and they'll be reasonable. Well, we'll be goin' now. Good-day, Mis' Garnett, and thank you fur listenin' to us."

The new concession was not easy to get from the manager, who naturally was not impressed with its

prospective value to the men. "Will they attend the meeting?" he asked.

"I've taken it for granted that they will. Still, I wouldn't want to make it compulsory."

"Well, it's an innovation that I never heard of. We'll try it for a week or two and see. If you want to pay the men for piety, I suppose they'll come, but if they don't, I can't see the good of it."

A day or two later the men paused in some embarrassment when they saw the fair-haired young minister standing in the hall, Bible in hand, as they went out at the old time, but most of them stopped and listened respectfully. The next day the Catholics and the few Jewish girls went on out the door, while the others remained. The following day all but a few church members went, and by the end of the week but a handful of men gathered in a corner. A notice was posted that only those who attended the meeting would be allowed the extra time. That noon but five men attended, and the next not a man left his work at the ten-minute whistle. Brand went sadly away with his unopened Bible in his hand.

Within a week a second deputation called on Mrs. Garnett with complaints of increasing despotism in small things. She begged the men to be patient for the sake of their old employer, and they promised again to try. She sent for Mr. Brown, and the interview was unsatisfactory on both sides. He told her that the men had been spoiled by the most unbusiness-like management that he ever heard of, and that it was absolutely

necessary for a new discipline to be maintained. He had not the claim of affection that Mr. Garnett had had, and it was a very different matter. He also intimated that he must be allowed to use his best judgment, that no woman could understand the things with which he had to contend, and that his efforts to make the larger profit she wished had led to the dissatisfaction.

She consulted Mr. Brand and her daughter over the growing troubles, but they were powerless to advise. No more complaints were made to Mrs. Garnett, but the increasing discontent was well known in town, and on a rainy evening in the last of April Brand heard that the pottery men had gone out on a strike, the first in the history of Mogadonia.

CHAPTER XIX

THE splendid May day was on the wane. A bar of sunshine slanted at a long angle through the floating dust of the dirty little waiting room at the junction, which appeared more grimy by contrast with the vivid greenness outside. Northmore shifted his big frame wearily on the partitioned seat and glanced through a year-old magazine, which, like the whitewashed stove, appeared to be an asset of the railroad company. The arrival of a train cut off his light, and knowing that it would add a fresh lot of passengers to those who now stupidly wainscoted the wall, he stretched himself lazily to his feet and went out on the platform. He had noticed an inviting road across the track which wound along the river through green fields and white orchards, and he stood waiting for the train to move out of his way that he might occupy the time in exploring it before his accommodation should come.

The passengers poured down from the coaches and rushed by him with the eagerness of junction arrivals who have not less than an hour to wait. He stepped back out of their way and brought up face to face with someone descending from the Pullman car, the sight of whom struck him dumb for the moment. They looked at each other speechlessly, then the girl recovered her presence of mind and offered her hand.

"I ought not to speak to you," she smiled, "but I am too angry with you not to grasp the opportunity to free my mind."

"Do." He took her bag from the porter. "It will be a delight even to have you scold me—if you will only talk to me. No, don't go in there; you can't breathe if you do. I will try to find a seat out here in the shade."

There was nothing on the shady side, however, that would answer for a seat.

"The road across there looks very pleasant; I was just going to take a walk on it when I met you. Wouldn't you like to try it? We have nearly an hour before our train comes."

"Very much. I've been riding since eight o'clock this morning."

"Come on, then." He helped her down the embankment in a matter-of-course way, and they turned into the firm, smooth turnpike at a swinging pace. A row of willows veiled in their first green mist skirted the river on one hand, a sweep of rich farms rolled from the other, their houses embowered in fragrant trees, and their slopes mantled in exquisite May green. Even the tiny young weeds that made a velvet border at the roadside were like some unsightly animals, beautiful in youth.

The two walked mute for many minutes, the man stirred to the depths of his strong soul by the lovely face beside him, at which he dared not look. It was the girl who shattered the silence that grew painful.

“Did you ever see anything so heavenly as this day? They come along, a few such days in a lifetime, whose perfectness can never be forgotten. It is as if the gates of Paradise were thrown open for a little, while a breeze or two escapes.” She was turning her face to the caress of the scarcely moving air.

“Yes, I am susceptible to these epoch-days that the gods send us when we are good—is it not? The one that stands out most clearly of all is the day last October—when you stopped in front of the post office. Do you recall it?”

“The morning when the children weren’t there? Indeed, I shall never forget it, but I can’t remember the weather at all—except that it didn’t rain.”

He made no answer. He was annoyed that he should have chanced upon that particular event, in his wild reach for something to say, to remind her of his part in it. A clump of cowslips gleamed golden in the edge of a roadside pool; he stepped aside to gather them and relieve the tension of silence; they trembled in his hand as he offered them to her. She fastened them on her breast.

“Can I stand that colour?” she asked nervously.

“You? Oh, yes—but the flowers cannot!”

“That was very pretty. I am almost forgiving you; why don’t you try to conciliate me when you see how angry I am? You were simply beyond pardon!”

“That is the reason I do not ask it.”

They had resumed their respective parts in the wordless drama of the last dinner at Heathermuir as though

there had not been a break of weeks between. They walked slowly in silence that was eloquent with darts of thought which flew from one to the other without need of words. When it grew too apparent he said, clumsily enough:

"You have occasion to be angry with me. I can't ask you to forgive my rudeness in going away without—even calling—but I was—very busy."

"What a sufficient reason! Too busy even to write a line?"

"Yes, I had to be busy; I had to rush every moment and then hurry myself off before I was ready to go—to keep from—seeing you again. If I had stayed a day longer, I must have gone out to you!"

"Ah! I thought you forgot!"

"Forgot!" He turned upon her fiercely. "You surely did not think that I could forget. Would that I could! What right have I to remember?"

His face was growing white; hers drooped over the cowslips she was tearing. She lifted it with sudden self-possession.

"But you were very rude," she said teasingly, to cover his earnestness.

"I had to be. I had to drive myself away—and to make you dislike me. I couldn't trust myself to see you again—nor to write. Why didn't you get genuinely angry with me—and refuse to speak to-day? That would have been some sort of barrier. I don't see why I have to meet you again, now, when—it has been like death—to try to tear it out—out of my life—my very

life! It is the sheerest presumption—to think of. Aren't you sorry for me—a little bit?"

It was long before she answered. "I don't see how I can be—when you don't tell me—what I am to be sorry for."

"You must know—you must—that I love you—worship you—with every faculty of my being. I have fought it from the moment I saw you—looking at me from the runabout that morning. I knew at a glance—that you were—not any kind of woman that I had ever seen before. But it was no use. It took me by storm—soul and body—it is for life and death with me. Whatever happens—wherever you go—I shall love you with every atom of my being—as long as I breathe. I know how presumptuous it is! It even crushes my pride—my manhood! I know all that you can say—I have said it a thousand times."

"Have you? Indeed!"

He was looking across the fields at his right; next the road a plat of wheat quivered with life; a springing meadow smoothed the knoll beyond; a dogwood flaunted its white flag from the edge of the woods; a bluebird dipped joyously on its homeward flight; suffering was human only. The moment was too intense for words. After a silence he glanced at her, seeing that she walked with face averted, but its hot flame spread to her throat.

"Don't you forgive me?" he was forced to ask at last.

"No."

"That is hard—but you can add nothing to my self-reproach."

"Then why are you afraid to let me try?"

"I couldn't bear it from you."

"Coward! And I thought you a man!" She blazed with indignant eyes upon him now.

"I don't know why. I had courage enough to tell you."

"But not enough to ask me! 'As if it made any—Mr. Northmore, if a man—a real man loves a woman—a real man—nothing but the sheerest cowardice would let a few little externalities separate them—or it might be a false and foolish pride. What else matters—if they love each other? There's only one thing in the whole world worth while. If Heaven and Earth should be swept away—and only Love remain—it is enough. And Love is imperishable."

The man smothered a groan. The girl's voice had grown clear and insistent. Her words cut their impress in his consciousness, to remain forever, and to be read again and again through every moment of the day, with every note of her voice remembered. She did not lift her eyes to him when his glance sought them—and he was glad. That saved him. There was a rude seat under a sycamore at the bend of the river, to which he drew her. His face was utterly white; her hand dropped upon her knee, and his hand wavered toward it, but he resolutely drew it back. When he was sure of his voice, he said gravely:

"Then it is worse than I knew—a double misfor-

tune! But I am not coward enough to allow—a—life sacrifice—even—if——”

“But you are! For your wretched pride you are willing to sacrifice—another life! You are selfish! You are cruel!—oh, you are not what I believed you!”

He sprang suddenly to his feet and gave her an assisting hand.

“We must go back now. We can’t stand this—we shall say something that both will regret—you don’t know what you are talking about—as I do. Some day you will see that I know best. Come.”

She obeyed the command of his tone, and they walked back through the lengthening shadows, so still that the placid gurgle of the shallow river upon its stones was the only accompaniment to their tumultuous thoughts, she with proud head erect, he with a battle-weary droop of shoulders that was the only evidence of tense self-mastery. When they were in sight of the station he said quietly:

“I have behaved so ill this afternoon that you are angry with me—and I shall not ask to call while I am in Mogadonia. It is better—that we should not be friends. You see that, don’t you?”

“No, but my seeing it would make no difference to you—who consult no one but yourself. If you don’t care for my friendship—it will not be forced upon you. Are you going back to live?”

“For a time, yes. Mrs. Garnett has sent for me to try to break the strike. The new manager has resigned.”

"And you don't want to see me? You are ungallant; you won't give me a chance to—to——"

"Refuse me? No."

"If you should—I believe I would do that very thing. You are arrogant—hard-hearted. Tell me this—if a girl was poor and a—man loved her, would he refuse to—to ask her to—to marry him on that account?"

"He might. Yes, if the girl had been rich—and beautiful, and a queen in her own right—and had thrown away her possessions because of him—he would be a scoundrel to take advantage of her rash impulse. You know that remedy would be worse than anything else. Now, we are going to forget. Don't you want to tell me what has happened in Mogadonia? Have you met Mr. Brand?"

"Yes, and he is a darling—a great deal more agreeable than——"

"I am. Yes, he always was. And your father is a candidate for the congressional nomination?"

"Yes."

"I have heard of wonderful improvements that are going on in town."

"Yes, there are."

They lapsed into strained silence which lasted to the station. Northmore pulled out a baggage truck which they used for a seat until the train came, when he found a place for Florida, and went back into the thick atmosphere of the smoker, though he did not smoke. At Mogadonia he went forward to hand her into the carriage which was waiting for her. She gave him her



"WITH A CURIOUS EXPRESSION THAT WAS NEITHER APPEAL NOR SCORNING—BUT SOMETHING OF BOTH."—Page 269.

hand in parting, with a curious expression in her eyes that was neither an appeal nor scorning, but something of both. He lifted his hat again as he turned away, and she watched his handsome back as he walked slowly down the platform. A bridal party that was just mounting the station stairs to take the next train, stopped him to shake hands. They were Mr. and Mrs. Firestone, starting for Abyssinia. The bride was formerly Miss Libby Ann Munson.

The hack from the Grand Hotel stood empty at the foot of the street and Northmore stepped in and sank upon a seat in utter exhaustion from the conflict of the last hour.

When he roused himself to a knowledge of things external, a day or two later, he found that the account of the wave of progressiveness which had struck Mogadonia had not been exaggerated. It had engulfed every part of the town except that which needed it most—Whisky Island. Going the round with Brand one morning during the week, Northmore felt himself a stranger, not so much to the changing physical features of the place as to the metropolitan spirit which was infecting its primitive provincialism. The new park struck him with foreboding as he foresaw what a popular and also what a demoralising influence it would be in the unscrupulous hands of Joe Fury.

“It will undo in a season all that you can do in a lifetime, for the children of this place,” he deplored to Brand.

“It is not to be in Joe Fury’s charge. He is a poli-

tical leader here, it seems, and is chosen for Mr. Morgan's campaign manager. It is too bad that Mr. Morgan has to employ a man of such insidious character, but he probably has an influence that makes him indispensable. Of course Mr. Morgan will control the conduct of the campaign so closely that Joe Fury will not be allowed to introduce any of his vicious methods. I know that we church people are all going to work for Morgan—and it will be a great thing for decency and morality when we elect him.”

Northmore did not answer.

The strike at the Garnett works was amicably settled by a slight concession on each side, and the kilns were fired again within a few days after Northmore's return. Notwithstanding Mrs. Garnett's plea, and the warmth of his reception, Northmore refused to sign for more than a few months as manager. Mrs. Garnett made him a generous offer and he had not yet chosen the way in which he should work out in business activity the consecration of his life to the ministry, but there was a powerful reason why he could not do it in Mogadonia.

The visit to Wildwood Park, and the obvious threat of its attractiveness to all that was good in the town, recalled with force his feeling of responsibility to the mission he had forsaken, and he was impelled to make an active opposition to the place. He thought of Mr. Garnett's plan with new regret, and wondered if it would be possible to carry out the scheme without its originator. With this idea he took out the roll of blue prints on his return to the office, finding them where they had been

placed by Mr. Garnett's hand in almost the last hour of his life. Before he could look them over, Mrs. Garnett and Silence came into the office adjoining for a consultation about the business. When the matter in hand was disposed of, Northmore told them of his visit to the Park, its future probabilities, and mentioned with some hesitation the scheme which had so engrossed Mr. Garnett. Both looked at him in amazement.

"Do you know anything about his idea?" asked Silence eagerly.

"I know all about it. Yes, indeed, I helped to draw the plans, and we went over them carefully the last evening that he was here—just before he went home. He intended to put the building up this spring."

"Oh, mother!" cried the girl.

"Where are the plans?" asked Mrs. Garnett.

"Spread out on the table in Mr. Garnett's den, right here. I was looking them over."

"Then," said Silence with quiet decision, "there's but one thing to do. We will carry out father's dearest wish for his men. We will do it at once while Mr. Northmore is here to help us—and try to offset a little of the harm that Joe Fury will do with his place. Isn't that so, mother?"

"Yes—probably you are right. If the plan had never been found, I should have built a chapel in which the men might worship—but since this is your father's wish, we will fulfil it."

Northmore was glad of the new obligation; it helped to fill the vacuum in his heart, and he entered upon it

earnestly, both to complete the measure of his friend's life purpose—and also to make the measure of his own less incomplete. After due investigation and consultation with Brand and a few friends of Mrs. Garnett and Silence, it was decided to enlarge the design by making it a co-operative plan in which the town could have an ownership, thus establishing a formidable rival to the island park.

At Northmore's suggestion a town meeting was called in the stockroom of the works, at which the plans would be exhibited and the matter laid before the public.

CHAPTER XX

PERHAPS from public spirit, perhaps out of respect to the memory of Proctor Garnett, the stockroom, neatly cleared and seated, was crowded to the wall when the evening of the town meeting came. Northmore had asked Mr. Harrington to preside, and acted as secretary himself, knowing the plans more fully than anyone else. The blue prints and stock books lay on the table. Both young men had grown enthusiastic as the idea expanded and gained upon them, and they watched with deep satisfaction as the people flocked in.

"Ah, there's Mr. Moneypenny," said Northmore in a low tone. "He is coming up front; we can rely upon him, and I hope that it will be a help to his boys."

"We will count on him to offset the opposition of Mr. Sims, who is coming up front on the other side to object on principle. Daddy Pocock, also, will object to any innovation on the good old way. Brand will be with us, although we haven't talked with him lately."

"There's Joe Fury with his smile," added Northmore. "He will agree to anything that will attract notice to the town, and he will not compliment us by considering us a rival. The Old Doctor has just arrived—he will be pretty conservative, I'm afraid."

"He'll have a good reason for it if he is. How the room has filled in the last few minutes! Better call them to order at once."

Harrington stated the object of the meeting, the need of such an institution as was proposed, and the good sum which came to them from the generous hand of one who was gone. The first person to rise to ask a question was the venerable minister of Tom Morgan's church.

"Before the first step is taken, please state exactly what amusements will be allowed in this building," he said.

"That will be decided by the Board of Trustees elected by the stockholders. It was the founder's intention to exclude only amusements that were intrinsically harmful or immoral."

"Would billiard and card playing come under that definition?" he persisted.

"It was not Mr. Garnett's intention to exclude them. The Board of Managers would have to decide."

"Then I shall be obliged to condemn the project and use my influence against it," said the minister finally.

He was hardly in his seat before Brand was on his feet, his fair face flushing with earnestness: "There is no more insidious temptation than that which comes to young people in the guise of pleasure. The very fact that public opinion is changing with regard to these things compels us to take a more decided stand against them."

Joe Fury was up before anyone else could rise, his unchanging smile turned upon the house, not the chairman.

"Stick to the ministers, every time, and you will

be on the right side, say I. We don't want any religious dance hall to lead off the children of this town. If they will run off and have a little dance of their own sometimes, they know it's wrong, but we don't want to encourage them by giving the opportunity. Put that money into our new churches and give them a place of worship that will hold everybody in this town."

He talked for some minutes, but before he had finished a fearless form in a green shawl rose near him and a rich throaty voice rang out like a tenor horn:

"Mr. Chairman, I come here thinkin' I didn't want any gilt-edged theatre or amusement place to lead my children off, but the minute Joe Fury took that side, I knowed I was on the other. Whatever he don't want is good for 'em—it will keep him from leadin' some of 'em to ruin. I know what I'm talkin' about. Now, Mr. Garnett knew that there wasn't a place in this town outside of our little houses where our young folks could gather for an innocent evenin's fun. They've got to roam the streets winter and summer. So I say let's have the new hall, and let's have the best lecturers, and the best music in it, and whatever games is good for 'em."

The Presbyterian minister was the next to speak.

"It strikes me that there is something fundamentally wrong when amusement is made such a vital question as Mr. Harrington considers it here to-night. In former times, children were reared in the house and the church. Are we not going to build a dangerous rival to these holy influences? Lead us not into temptation!"

Northmore drew a long breath when he saw the slim form of Elijah Sims loom up from the front.

“Mr. Chairman and Fellow Citizens: I think the arguments for the new hall is better than those agin it. It will be a big improvement to the town, and thar needn’t be no evil in it ef we don’t put it thar. I’m ready to take stock in it the minute the books is open.” He clinched this with a series of nods.

The two young men stared incredulously at each other; they smiled with confidence the moment Mr. Moneypenny rose.

“Mr. Chairman,” he said explosively, “I won’t sit in silence and hear plans that make my blood boil. I can’t believe that I hear our former minister proposing to build a place in which *card playing* will be allowed, while no assurance is given that worse things will be prohibited. Am I to suppose that even in respect to our townsman’s memory, his wife and daughter, members of my church, want to start religious *gambling* and *dancing* in our midst? What are we coming to? Is there to be no distinction between church members and sinners? My friends, we don’t want this enterprise to go one step further. We want to crush it right now.” His voice trembled with feeling.

A tall, bent form with a little hangman’s beard got stiffly to its feet, and the young men looked discouraged at the prospect of more opposition. Daddy Pock began in his slow utterance:

“Mr. Cheerman and Neighbours: I’ve listened to yore talk, and ginerally speakin’, I’ve agreed with both sides.

Thar's reasons fur an' reasons agin, an' we've got to see which is the biggest. I 'low that Sister Susan, over there, is the nighest right of any of us. Now, every one of you-all knows me, and knows that I'm dead sot agin weackedness and worldliness, but I don't see how this here hall is goin' to interfere with church goin'. We've got to remember that church doors is locked all but five hours a week—and what you goin' to do fur the time when you're locked out? The Lord don't lock up his little dumb critters in no place whar they can't play. I've set these spring days an' watched M'ria's leetle chickings playin' round the yard, and their maw don't raise no objection. She knows it's good fur their laigs, and she jest keeps track of 'em. An' the lambs is skippin' an' rollin' up on the hill while the ole folks crops grass, and the kittens is rollin' an' tumblin' on the kitchen floor, an' I know them chickings an' lambs an' kittens is doin' what the Lord intended 'em to—an' they ain't sinnin' one bit. An' more than that, they got to do it—or they don't grow right. They've got to have that play-time while they're growin', an' so has chillern. I've studied the Book all my life, an' never yit found anything in it agin young folks bein' young. Thar ain't even none agin dancin', but I can't go so fur as that—all to oncet. But I 'low we don't need to go no higher'n the Book fur our religion."

There was a surprised hush as the old man ended. It was Mrs. Jernigan who spoke it:

"God bless you, Daddy; you're all right, you dear old soul!" she cried impulsively, and somebody started

a round of applause which carried a great deal of conviction.

Little Benny Myers, the homeopathic doctor, was highly in favour of the hall. He said that he was the parent of four boys in a house not big enough for one in rainy weather.

The Old Doctor had been called away early in the meeting. Several others expressed brief opinions, pro and con, and when the sentiment of the meeting appeared to have had utterance, Northmore stepped to the front for a closing word:

“Relaxation is one of the important elements of modern life. The high-keyed, nervous activity of the present can be sustained only by rests. We must re-create our worn faculties from reserves of amusement. We must teach the outreaching minds of the young to seek elevated relaxation, which is in itself a source of education. Our pleasure is such an important index of character that national morals are known by national sports. We cannot find high standards in a country whose delight is the bull fight.

“Our large cities are trying to fill the immense importance of this demand in many ways. The church recognises that almost all evil tempts the young in the guise of pleasure, and that natural craving cannot be eradicated, hence in crowded districts of large cities the institutional church and the social settlement furnish a people’s club which supplies this demand. But we in the small town have nothing, and we pay the penalty. What is it robs us of the children as fast as they are fledged?

The dulness of the place. How often do we have an entertainment to which our young people can go? Since last September there has been one concert, and an informal lecture in one of the churches. In certain cities of Europe a beautiful building is maintained by taxation for the entertainment of the public at a nominal cost, and has proved highly successful under the different conditions. Now it is in our power to have the finest institution of any place of our size in the country; a combined institutional church, social settlement, and town club, in which everyone may have an interest. The question is in your hands."

Northmore was always convincing; there was a flutter of approval as he sat down. The meeting was adjourned and the books opened for subscriptions. There were surprises in this practical test of approval. Those who had said the least were the most generous in the figures that followed their names. Elijah Sims put down his name for two shares of stock at ten dollars a share, while Squire Pocock painfully indited a thousand dollars after his autograph. But when Northmore and Harrington counted up after the meeting they found that a large deficiency still remained in the required amount.

"Mr. Morgan will help us," said Harrington confidently.

"We will not ask him," said Northmore. "I will add part of it, and the rest can be gradually collected from the people as the work is known."

CHAPTER XXI

THERE was no complaint of dulness in Mogadonia during the months of that summer, with a round of rival church entertainments for building funds, with Wildwood Park offering undreamed-of attractions day and evening, with the new memorial, which was to be called Garnett Hall, under construction, and with the stormiest congressional campaign the district had ever known, shaking it to its centre.

The bitterness of this campaign was a surprise to people in general, who supposed that Tom Morgan had simply to announce that he wanted anything, to obtain it; but Thompson Jones, representative for the last three terms, had in that time served a creditable novitiate and had just reached a recognition point for fearlessness in the appointment to a committee for investigation of certain irregularities in the relations of railroads and shippers. It was strongly suspected that Mr. Morgan was personally interested in this matter, being the heaviest shipper of manufactured goods in the district, but whether that was true or false, he considered it worth while to make the fight of his life to defeat Jones, who held his vantage ground with corresponding tenacity.

As the climax approached, the contest, which had been ostentatiously begun on high ground, narrowed

down to a bitter personal attack. The political record of Jones was unimpeachable, and his business career had been above reproach, but he had a vulnerable point, an ugly scandal of his youth, which his antagonist unearthed and used to the fullest effect in contrast with his own fair domestic and philanthropic reputation. The Civic Morality League, inspecting the claims of both candidates regardless of party, condemned Jones and endorsed Morgan upon this ground, which became the campaign slogan. While the elevated methods of Morgan's party were being vaunted, his workers, under the leadership of Joe Fury, were publishing revolting personalities about Jones, and Wildwood Park had become the rendezvous of political crowds from far and near. That the debauchery which disgraced the grove could be part of the argument was not suspected by the unsophisticated Mogadonians, even when every booth blazed with highly coloured lithographs of Morgan.

Tom Morgan had not been asked to assist in the building of Garnett Hall, and, perhaps for this reason, perhaps for the reason that he had always had a jealous dislike for Mr. Garnett, he took occasion to express his disapproval of the entire proposition as one which would tend to lead astray the young people of the town. Mogadonia was breathless already, but this unexpected damper from so powerful a source was an additional theme for discussion among the overworked guardians of public sensation. Business was forgotten; merchants wrangled with customers; delivery boys lingered at the kitchen door to tell the latest opinions while

cakes burned in the oven and bread ran over and kettles boiled dry, ere public sentiment was sure of itself.

Northmore was busy almost day and night with his factory superintendency and with the direction—and defence—of Garnett Hall upon his hands, into both of which he put his energy with conscientious thoroughness. It was a strenuous summer to him. There were days when he worked with a desperate hopelessness, trying to forget what would not leave his consciousness for a moment; there were other days when his blood leaped with happiness at the memory of a chance meeting with Florida, when she had bowed and smiled—never more—and the mere sight of her was enough. Reaction followed these periods, in which he wondered if he must live his bankrupt life to the end of its empty years—and he was young and very strong!

At the quarry where he went to select the stone to be used in Garnett Hall Northmore found his early friend, Quiggins.

“I’m glad to see you back where you can do some good,” said the workman, wiping his dusty hand before grasping the one extended to him. “Well, ain’t there doin’s in this town this summer? What do you think of the Old Man’s chances? Think he’s goin’ to get there?”

“It looks very much that way. He’s certainly lengths ahead in the race now.”

“So they say. Well, you know what I think of him! He’s at the old tricks, ladlin’ out piety and generosity with both hands, sweepin’ into Congress in

a golden chariot—and who do you think is payin' fur it? ”

“ I know a few people who are paying for it.”

“ There's more than a few. We've had a ten per cent. cut to help pay expenses, and our old engine's at the last wheeze—through this rush, too. I wish men were owned like mules ; then they'd be worth takin' care of. But they're cheap—lots cheaper to hire new ones than to buy new engines.”

“ I don't believe that Mr. Morgan knows that you are in danger here,” urged Northmore, who was just. “ He would not risk human life.”

“ No, but he won't know it. He just makes the boss understand that this quarry has got to pay so much—it's nearly pure profit anyway—and if it don't, there'll be a new boss. Not one of us men could get to Tom to tell him anything—to save our lives—not to *save our lives!* No, he takes mighty good care not to know it.”

Northmore smiled. “ You would make a good campaigner for the other man, Mr. Quiggins.”

“ Oh, Lord, wouldn't I give my head to have education enough to make just one talk! I don't know why Jones don't air up a few of the sneakin' tricks. Now what do you think that park down there outside the town line is? It's nothin' but a campaign saloon, nothin' else on earth but that—and Tom Morgan's money's runnin' it. But he don't know it—oh, no! He's sweet and innocent as an Easter lamb. He just invites Joe Fury to be his manager, and says, ‘ I'll leave the whole business to you an' furnish the dough,’ and

that's all Joe needs. Morgan's buildin' two churches this summer. Land! Does he think them churches 'll ever undo the carloads of free drinks it's goin' to take to git him to Washington? I tell you, the man that sees through him, that sees how pious he is for the good people and how low he is for the bums, and that don't git up and tell it—is an almighty coward.”

Northmore dropped his eyes. “It is strange that no one has made capital of that for the other side.”

“It's time somebody did. But if Mogadonia wants to send an almighty hypocrite to make laws for the country, they have the vote to do it!”

Northmore drove home through Whisky Island, the nearest way, and met the long procession of colliers going to the night shift. There had been threats of a strike among these men, and he wondered how they would be able to live even for one week of idleness, so apparent was their abject poverty. Yet these poor men, living with their families under conditions so unsanitary as to be a menace to the whole town, were earning a surplus of wealth for some distant owner who troubled himself no more about their lives than those of the dogs who fought in the street. This quarter had always lain upon his conscience, yet it was the only spot in Mogadonia to which his influence had not reached. He wondered if some fairer balance of world products would solve the vast poverty problem in a halcyon future.

As the campaign grew more vigorous the walls of Garnett Hall rose in tangible beauty and were soon

under roof. An untraceable current of disfavour persistently gained headway; many who had tacitly endorsed the scheme in theory, openly condemned its realisation. It was too fine to be right, or to be practicable; only a palace of sin could show such fair proportions. Northmore was much troubled by the rumours that reached his ears, knowing the contagious nature of Mogadonia criticism, but he could only wait now for the convincing argument of fulfilment. At the same time the campaign was such a disturbing force that it had become unsafe for women to walk alone in the evening through the disorderly streets. Crowds of political enthusiasts reeled back to their excursion trains in turbulent lawlessness, for Mogadonia was the campaign centre of the district. Northmore could guess the source of this, but it came to him at first hand one evening when he stood inside the new building after making his customary round of inspection. A knot of excursionists stood on the sidewalk in front and were joined by Joe Fury.

"Hello, boys," said the manager genially, and Northmore knew just how he smiled. "Hello! Gettin' in line for the 'lection?"

"How's it goin', Joe?" asked two or three.

"Oh, I've got all my money on Morgan. He's all right! Jones has the machine, but we're goin' to smash that all to kindlin's. Tom Morgan's the whole thing, biggest man this distric' ever seen. Oh, we're goin' to have some honest politics in this distric' now, an' an honest man to represent us. Think what Tom's done

fur the county—what he's done fur us—look at the work he gives to men here, and the payroll he keeps goin'! Now what has Jones ever done? Not a blame thing! What's Jones done fur us? Not a damn thing! He ain't even got us a new post office—in six years! Why, Tom'll git that river opened up fur boats, and he'll have us a stunnin' new post office in six months. Jones ain't spendin' a cent on the boys, either. If he had his way, he'd go in with the preacher that's buildin' this holy theaytre, and put the whole town on weak tea fur the rest of our lives."

"Ain't Morgan buildin' two churches?" asked one.

"He's helpin'—but that don't hurt us. We ain't in the church business, but this thing 'll draw off my custom, it'll put me out of business when it gets to runnin'. That preacher 'll run a Dow Law campaign himself when he gets round to it, an' the town'll go dry. Then where 'll we be?"

"Damn shame!" said a man thickly. "Can't they mind their own biz, an' let us alone?"

"Ever know reform cranks to do that? No, sir-ee! They don't want to go to Heaven alone; they've got to pull the rest of us in by the ears a-kickin'. Now, Tom—well, there ain't a stingy bone in Tom. Come over and have something on Tom, boys, have a dozen, all the same to Tom, he pays the freight. You may have to brace up on water next year, so now's your chance."

The group went off with a medley of choice oaths.

Northmore was not the only person who resented the 'double play for votes on both moral and immoral plat-

forms, but he was the only one who succeeded in having some of the worst law breakers arrested and punished, a proceeding that was bitterly resented by Fury. Not many days after this a card was brought up to Northmore's office bearing a name new to him. When the caller was shown up he introduced himself as the manager of Jones' campaign.

"I've come to ask some help of you, Mr. Northmore. We understand that you've been trying to keep up a little show of decency in this town during the fight, and Mr. Jones hoped that you might be willing to help him to the extent of making a few campaign speeches," he explained.

"I never made a speech in my life," and Northmore smiled at the idea.

"We know that you could do it all right, and that you know the facts. Morgan is playing a despicable game. He is posing as the 'good man Tom,' and is debauching the district at the same time by the vilest use of money ever made here, besides conducting a mud-slinging canvass."

"Isn't that rather an extreme statement?" protested Northmore.

"I leave you to judge that for yourself. I am not saying anything about his personal life, which is all right, but it is disgraceful to send a man utterly devoid of business conscience to Congress. Don't you think so? Now, my man is honest—true to the core—though he isn't—well, he is a man of the world, that is all. Morgan is a punctilious hypocrite; he won't have a

bottle of wine in his house, but he is a human vampire; he has fattened on the blood of other men. He wants to go to Congress to protect his own corruption with money if he can. He thinks he's big enough for that, Morgan does. Jones has been there long enough to begin to get a hearing, and we want to return him to do honest work. He has ten times the brains of the other man. Now, Mr. Northmore, we want you to make about a dozen ringing speeches in the district. You may set your price on them, for Jones makes no pledges."

The man leaned back, crossed his legs, and fastened his eyes on Northmore.

"I couldn't do it without some preparation. I couldn't do it at all."

"Makes no difference. You're our man all right enough. You know the issues, and we can put you onto enough ugly, sneaking trickery to prove to you that it would be treachery to the people to let that man go to Congress without lifting your voice to prevent it," urged the man.

"I don't know why you have come to me. I can't take an active part against Mr. Morgan."

"You're the only man that can do it—you know that—and beat him. And if you have any conscience, you have simply *got* to do it."

Northmore gnawed his lip miserably.

"It is—out—of—the—question. I will not do it," he decided.

"Very well, sir. You may consider yourself a party to the fraud when that man goes to Congress," and his visitor rose.

Northmore accompanied him to the door. "Give me till to-morrow. You have no idea what you have asked. I will give you a final answer in the morning."

Alone, he locked the door and took counsel with himself in a tramp back and forth across the floor, but before he had worked out his line of duty a knock interrupted him, and he unwillingly responded to admit—to his unspeakable surprise—*Tom Morgan*. He gave his new visitor a seat with dread at his heart. He was not long in suspense.

"I can spare only a moment, Mr. Northmore, so I will talk business at once. We have got to have a strong speaker for the closing meetings. The opposition is crowding us hard and we have got to fight to the death. I don't know your politics, but I do know your principles, and I know you would work for decency and good character in the head of the ticket, other things being equal. My life is an open book, Mr. Northmore. You have been in my home—and that is my record. Now, I appeal to you as a friend to do the talking of your life for me—and I know that you can elect me."

The friendly familiarity of his manner was irresistible. Northmore slowly whitened to the lips as he sat dumb. The other saw his hesitation, but attributed it to stunned modesty.

"I mean just what I say, Mr. Northmore. I have heard you talk and there is no one else in the State that I know of who would have your power in this district. I never heard so convincing a speaker, myself, anywhere. That is why I want you; I want you to convince these people that this is not a mere fight for office; it is a

fight for religion, and temperance, and social purity—that ought to have weight with neighbours who have known me all my life. And I assure you that I would recognise my obligation to you in the most substantial way. You are a man who would fill any appointment with credit.”

Northmore hesitated so long that Mr. Morgan coughed suggestively.

“I don’t doubt your appreciation of what I might do—but——” his thick voice failed.

There was one appeal yet to add. “You needn’t fear to understate it. It would mean a good deal to a young man adrift as you are. I spoke to my wife and daughter about it, and they were delighted with the idea; my daughter was enthusiastic. I believe that she would have come to ask you herself if I had wanted her to.” The rich man looked almost pleadingly into the quivering face before him, surprised at its tragic lines.

“You know what I have done for the place; I have paid more taxes, employed more men, used more raw material, than any other man in the county. I have given a little to charity and religion—which I do not mention, except to you. And you will put me under the deepest obligations, for it would be a humiliation that I can hardly think of to be beaten by such a man as Thompson Jones.”

“I know that—and I know that it would also be the opportunity of my life—in a way that will never come again—but——”

“To a man of your breadth, party affiliations have little weight——”

Northmore appeared to have lost his breath. “Wait a minute,” he gasped, dropping his head upon his hand. When he lifted his face it was perfectly white, but he spoke with clear decision: “I’m extremely sorry, but I can’t do it, Mr. Morgan.”

“You can’t do it! Of course you can! What is going to prevent you?”

“The fact that I am going to—to take the stump for—JONES! I highly appreciate the honour you have done me, and regret that it is impossible—regret it more than you can realise.”

Mr. Morgan got to his feet, speechless; he turned to the door before he found utterance. “You don’t seem to realise the situation.”

“I think that I do.”

“When I make a friendship it is for life—but not many men have crossed my path a second time. You don’t know me as well as you think you do,” he said in slow, white anger.

Northmore bowed him out without reply. Then he locked the door.

The autumn afternoon floated away, the evening whistle blew, and the operatives trooped out and went home; the luxurious day hung golden for an hour or two on the rim of the world, before sinking into the flaming west. The pure chill of night rose from the earth; points of light spangled the sky; a yellow moon hung a horn above Moriah, while the evening street life

rippled in through the open window. The eight-fifteen train came and went, the hack rumbled by; the stream of idlers flowed back from the station, and the deep quiet of night settled over the valley. There was hardly a light in the town when Northmore's tall figure came wearily, but with resolution, out of the closed building, as the winner of a great victory might do who has been maimed for life.

CHAPTER XXII

THERE had been such a succession of important events in Mogadonia during all the summer weeks that sensation had fairly palled upon its citizens, and Northmore was not surprised to see Brand in his office when he reached it one morning, with a new trouble in his face.

"You must come right down to Whisky Island with me," he began, after a hurried "Good-morning." "It is reported that a scourge of diphtheria has broken out there, and has been running for a week or more. The mayor is out of town, the hamlet is not in this corporation, the Old Doctor has gone off on a long ride into the hills, which will keep him all day—and somebody must do something. Will you come? Those people haven't the first sanitary regulation, they say."

"No, I know they haven't. Yes, we must do something at once. We will try to hunt up an authority and establish quarantine."

Half way down the incline Brand stopped as though he had been struck. A man was putting up a moist poster on a board fence, which announced in letters six inches long that a *Thompson Jones* campaign meeting would be held in Mogadonia on the following Saturday night, whose speaker would be—"NORTHMORE!"

"What does that mean? Is there another man of your name in the county?" gasped the minister.

“No.”

“But it can’t be—you don’t mean——?”

Northmore winced before his friend’s accusing eyes.

“Yes, I have promised to do some speaking for Jones.”

“Against your own candidate? Against Morgan! Impossible. I can’t understand you, Northmore, but I suppose when a man breaks loose from his—principles—he is driven by any wind.”

“No, Brand,” Northmore was grave, for he knew that a multitude of voices spoke through his friend’s lips, “it isn’t so bad as that. It isn’t treachery. It is the only thing I could conscientiously do—after taking the other stand.”

But Brand did not see how that could be, and Northmore’s tone was too final to admit of explanation, so they walked in silence the rest of the way.

The sanitary condition of Whisky Island could hardly have been worse. There was sickness of a malignant type in every other house, yet the inmates were mingling in voluble groups in the cinder-strewn streets, and visiting the stricken from house to house. The young men sought an English-speaking resident for some moments before one could be found. Northmore thought of the gracious Irish woman whom he and Florida had found a year before, and led the way to her alley. A wail of sorrow told him that the Destroyer was before him. Her small house was crowded with sympathetic neighbours, while children swarmed curiously under the windows. The two friends looked at each other and questioned what could be done with such wholesale dis-

regard of human safety as this. While they discussed means of attack, a familiar runabout drove down the hill which made Northmore quail and turn his face away. He knew that by this time the road must blaze with posters. Then, with a quick second thought, he sprang toward the horse, catching the bridle and backing it away.

"You must go right back! You can't come a step nearer." He freed a hand to lift his hat.

"It is true, then? There is sickness here?"

"Yes, the situation is terrible."

"What are you going to do?"

"Notify the owners, Miss Morgan. We will do what is necessary. You must go home."

"Who does own this?" she asked suddenly.

"The Indian Valley Coal Company."

"Do any of the stockholders live here?"

"The president does."

"Will you tell me who he is?" She watched him with fear in her eyes. The colour died out of Northmore's grave face, and he did not answer. She understood. She leaned forward and spoke low to him. "Is that why—you are—doing—the other?" she wrung out from quivering lips.

"Partly. That and kindred reasons. I do not do it voluntarily—you believe that, don't you? I was cornered so that there was no honourable way out—but this suicidal one."

She reflected with anguish in her eyes. "I believe that you are honest about it—and that you do it partly

because it *is* hard for you—suicidal, as you say—but, oh, you might have spared him! I shall hate you—you know that—don't you? He is only like the rest of the world, and he is such a dear, kind father! Why must you judge him by a standard that he never learned?"

"Because his great power to do injury must compel him to learn it now."

"But he will not abuse his power—as you think. In all past time, whatever the law permitted was right, and if a man lived morally and gave liberally—so much was urged upon his liberality—he was forgiven for having overstepped the letter of Christianity. We are making a new law—in our generation—but he doesn't think of that. I can see where you both stand, you and my father—but I must not judge him. You are his enemy forthwith—and mine—forever! Now, go and do what you can for these wretched people, and make him do what he should—but in the campaign—oh, at least be just to him!"

"Do you need to ask that?" he groaned bitterly as she turned, without further adieu, and drove away.

"What are the first steps to take?" asked Brand as they came to another reeking alley a little farther on.

"To notify Mr. Morgan—or arrest him, if necessary, under a State law."

"Not—you don't mean our—not *Tom Morgan*?"

"Yes."

"Impossible! That good man! Is that why you refused to accept——?"

"It is the beginning of the reason of everything I have done."

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"I heard him at Bellevue last night," reported Mr. Moneypenny, "and it was the biggest speech I ever heard on a political platform. I wish it was Northmore himself who was our candidate. He's a big man—if he is a young one—and nothing on earth can keep him down. He talks like he preached, no bluster, no noise, just clean, strong fact that drives you right along with him. He goes right down into the muddle of a thing and makes it clear; he doesn't tell jokes nor ridicule the other side; he didn't abuse Tom Morgan nor show up his meanness; he didn't seem to have time, there was so much to say about the issues. He didn't even say 'Thompson Jones' till the last thing, when he was winding up; then he says, 'These are the facts and these are the principles which this candidate stands for, and Thompson Jones' record shows that he will be true to them.' And the people never got through applauding. He sweeps along so strong he don't leave a thing for the other side to say, even if the other side had a man that could say it."

Mr. Moneypenny was superintending the decoration of the speaker's stand for the Saturday night meeting at Mogadonia, and uttered this report from the top of a stepladder. "I don't see why Morgan let them get him," he added, draping folds of tri-coloured bunting across the planks.

"Morgan couldn't have got him, party or no party,"

answered Mr. Harrington, holding up a handful of nails.

“Morgan generally gets what he wants—that he’s willing to pay for.”

“Except Northmore. Morgan hasn’t money enough to pay for him. I tell you that one fearless man has roused this town to a new morality—as I have personal reason to know. People are beginning to have a respect for honest principles that was never dreamed of before.”

“Northmore’s going to ruin his own prospects in doing it—I guess he’s ruined them already. If he beats Morgan, it will be the blow of Morgan’s life, and he will simply sweep Northmore off the face of the earth.” Mr. Money Penny was climbing up the slender scaffolding with a roll of bunting in his hand, and he illustrated with a wave of the bunting how it would be done.

“No one knows that better than Northmore himself. It will be his victory, too, for we all know that he has wiped out party lines in this district. Nobody knows anything but the candidates this fall. I only wish he was one himself.”

“Just wait a little for that,” called down the man from above.

“No, it will never be,” declared the other.

“How did it ever happen that the date of the Morgan Barbecue was changed to the dedication day of our hall—when we had tried so hard to avoid that very thing?” wailed Silence to her lover as they stood on the steps of her home and looked down at the sinuous trail

of yellow dust that hung over every road into the town, hiding the continuous procession of vehicles of every sort which stretched back into the hills. There had been a long drought, and the late October day dawned superbly, blazing with colour, but underlaid with dust.

"It never happened at all, dearest. It was the one way in which Mr. Morgan could revenge himself upon Northmore."

"But Florida has been so interested and given so much, I should think she wouldn't have let him change to our day. She promised to slip in this evening."

"There are evidently things that Florida cannot do, or she certainly would not have consented to this. But we shall make the best of it."

By ten o'clock the narrow streets were blocked with traffic, though the first excursion train was only then arriving at the station. With it came the toy balloon man, the pink-popcorn-and-candy man, the taffy cart, the tintype van, the mockingbird-whistle man, and the campaign button fakir. The great barbecue was preparing in a trench in Wildwood Park, which had been wholly given up to campaign purposes for the last few weeks, and the air was freighted for miles around with odours of roasting oxen, sheep, pigs, and chickens, which were to feed the multitudes in true old-time style. Excursion trains continued to come in and discharge their noisy loads at short intervals, until the middle of the afternoon. Each one brought its Morgan Club, accompanied by a brass band, which marched to the Grand International Hotel, where they were reviewed by

Mr. Morgan from the porch. The marshals of the day in tall white hats and scarlet sashes galloped bravely back and forth through the crowd without interfering with its disorder in the least. When most of the trains were in, a procession was formed for the march to the park, Mr. Morgan leading in a gaily decorated carriage followed by the clubs, their bands occurring at short intervals in loud competition, these followed in turn by a long line of ununiformed men and boys. It became apparent early in the day that the wells of Mogadonia were flowing stronger liquids than buttermilk and beer. Under the belligerent inspiration of campaign conviviality, political antagonisms sharpened claws and showed teeth in turbulent wrangle. When the great crowds, the largest in the county's history, had been abundantly feasted, speeches in the grove began, but so small a proportion of the people could get near enough to hear—and so few wanted to hear—that a tidal wave of lawlessness surged back to town and rent the air with anticipatory braying of fish horns.

Fortunately the dedication of the Hall had taken place in the morning before the noise had reached its worst. In the afternoon the building was to be thrown open for a public reception, and in the evening the winter course of entertainments was to be inaugurated by a high-class concert.

Mrs. Garnett and Silence, the latter in white for the first time since her father's death, drove down to the Hall in the early afternoon, through such a mass of disorderly sovereignty that they went round for Susan

Jernigan, thinking that she could scarcely make her way on foot through the dusty, impassable streets. They finally reached the Hall, where Maria Pocock and a dozen young girls in their best dresses were waiting to allow Mrs. Garnett and her daughter to be the first to enter. Northmore and Harrington were but a moment later, and the committee members followed soon, hurrying about to see that every last detail was in order. Twenty minutes before the announced hour for the reception a large figure darkened the door, whom Susan Jernigan hastened to welcome and to claim as her prize.

"I'm goin' to take the Old Doctor round myself," she proclaimed. "I've ben waitin' ever since the foundation was laid to take him round first. You may show all the rest of the town if you'll let me take him."

"You surely may," laughed Silence, seeing the grip she had upon his arm. He squared himself, arms akimbo, and gazed round the audience room.

"Why, Susan, what's this, a theatre?" he asked softly.

"No, we don't call it that. It's a lecture hall for everything good and improvin', concerts an'—well, yes, if good plays come 'long, I shouldn't wonder if they'd be let in. All these chairs can be moved out when we want it for a church doin's or a big party. You know Garnetts' is the only house in town big enough for anything of the sort."

"I guess that's right. And when are these things to come off?"

"All the time. There's to be two evenin's a week when there's doin's a body can come to—and be educated—and the tickets are only to pay expenses. If you take a ticket for three dollars, you can come a whole year on it, but it will cost you twenty-five cents for a single time."

"I see—a sort of winter Chautauqua—popular instruction and amusement combined."

"I never could get to Chautauqua, but I think the winter is when we need a thing like this—when our children has to get out of the nest a bit. What do you think of it?"

He leaned heavily on his cane, eyes roving round the beautiful big room, then upon the creamy maple floor. "They'll never dance here, will they, Susan?" he asked in a tragic whisper.

"Doctor, I've learned lately that there's things so much worse than dancin' that I'm not borrowin' trouble on that account. Anything in this place is bound to be innocent and respectable. We're—seein' some things different, now."

"But, say, Susan, I'm not in this. How did I come to be left out?"

"They'd be glad of you any way you can be got, Doctor. Now come upstairs; did you ever see such pretty ones? Wide and easy! This first room's the library—a circulatin' library—and Mr. Northmore selected every book. This case here's the State travellin' library that's changed every six months. Off to this side is the readin' room with magazines and papers—

that's Florida Morgan's gift. Now, ain't that the cosiest little spot you ever saw?"

"Ah, Susan, I was born too soon! Why couldn't there have been something of this in time for me? Look at that jolly fireplace for an old-fashioned log fire—and the pretty green walls with flowers at the top. Do let me come here and read the papers sometimes," he begged with facetious humility.

Her rich laugh rang out with delight at the plea; the beloved Old Doctor!

"Now come over to the reception room—it's big enough for a parlour, too. Us members that haven't nice houses are goin' to give parties here same as other folks. Oh, Doctor, don't you see how much chance it's goin' to give some of us poor folks?"

"You'll be right in it, Susan. What's the next room?"

"That's one of the best things in it, a little comfort room for farmer's wives to rest and visit in and leave their packages in. There's never a place for the farmer's wife and daughters while he's in town. They have to sit in the waggon after their shoppin's done—or stand round in the stores if the weather's bad. But this has lounges and easy chairs and a fireplace—and there's a lunch table or two in the little room off. Nothing here'll give more pleasure than that. Back there is the boys' readin' room, and in the other corner is the nursery with all sorts of games. This last one, over the porch, is a smoking room."

"I don't believe a word of it. You've told me too

much. In Mogadonia! Never! I wish I'd longer to enjoy life—with such fairy stories as this."

"Time enough now, if you'll take better care of yourself. Come down to the basement."

"That's a joke, Susan. You're going to lock me up in the coal bin," he chuckled, following her with careful steps down the lower stairs.

"Why, what's all this?" he asked as she led him into a room under the porch.

"This is the gymnasium, Mr. Northmore's part. I guess it's perfect in its way; my Ben is wild over it. Along the side is a bowling alley, and at the back is a swimming pool. The next is a play room for boys, but Mr. Harrington said if they ever wanted a billiard room it would do for that."

"That day'll be long coming—though I don't know. I wouldn't have believed this a year ago. Why, Susan, what's this? More fairy tale?"

"Did you ever try to cook a meal in a dream? I never could get one finished in mine. But you sit down here and see if you think you're dreaming. Just peep into the kitchen first."

"Kitchen? Do you call this beautiful blue and white room a kitchen—with the glass cupboards and the stunning range? And a sink with hot and cold water—as I live. Who's goin' to run this part of it, Susan? I hope it's some friend of mine."

"Yes, it is, a friend that'll be glad to have you whenever you can come—and that's me. Now, Doctor, you're goin' to set down in this lovely green and ivory

dinin'-room and be the first one served in it. Here's four girls waitin' to bring you ice cream and cake and the best coffee you ever drank—from the new machine. There's Doctor Tommy pokin' round and lookin' hungry, but he isn't goin' to have one bite till you've been served. You go an' see the bathrooms, Doctor Tommy, till your pa's ben waited on. Now, girls, you jest wait on the Doctor till he can't eat no more, for I've got to go upstairs. Folks are comin' fast."

Which was embarrassingly true, as not only expected guests from the town were making their difficult entrance, but many half-tipsy politicians from remote nooks of the hills, where it was counted a surfeit of learning to be able to write one's name, were edging themselves into what they thought a side show of the campaign festivities. Rough men elbowed their way about, making familiar comments to the girl ushers.

Late in the afternoon, when the procession returned from the park, it became necessary to close the doors of the Hall, and open them only for exit. Some of the committee did not venture home at all, but stayed over for the concert in the evening. Meanwhile pandemonium raged in the streets, where the marshal of the day and his assistants were as straws in a gale. The black cinder dust, ground and set afloat by the trampling of many feet, hung in a thick, dry mist through which the maudlin cries of drunken men, the rattle of waggons, the neighing of hungry horses, the hoarse iteration of fakirs, and the fretting of special locomotives which waited for the excursion trains, made a strident medley

of sounds which echoed back from the hills. Weary mothers with little children clinging to their skirts searched for errant husbands—or persuaded them when found to start for home, and the line of outward-bound waggons soon stretched toward the hills. But the committee at Garnett Hall looked anxiously from its windows at the turgid crowd which lingered for the torch-light procession that night, and which had now entirely abandoned the park for the streets.

CHAPTER XXIII

NORTHMORE and Harrington held a brief consultation about the advisability of abandoning the concert, but as the musicians were from a distance, and were already in town, and many people would be disappointed at so inauspicious an opening, it was decided to go on, even under disadvantages.

Mrs. Garnett and Silence, who, among others, had stayed over, directed attendants at the Hall, while the two young men picketed the approach with guards from the pottery. Participants in the torchlight procession were crowding back and forth on the sidewalks, wobbling their ill-smelling torches around the new building in meaning proximity.

In spite of difficulties, a large audience assembled, protected from ruffians by the vigilance of the guards. The discordant blare of many bands, and the unrestrained torment of fish horns, forewarned the assemblage that there was no hope of hearing the really fine music that was to be rendered. Not long before the opening, a tumult occurred which might have developed into a general *melee* but for prompt measures. A man whose clothes bore marks of many tumbles in the dust, edged his way into the vestibule, profanely declaring that he was a Morgan man and entitled to a free ticket to the show. It required force to eject

him, and as the guard released him on the sidewalk, he fell, cutting his forehead on the curbstone. He thought he had been struck and hurt, and raised an outcry which surrounded him with sympathisers longing to fight off their surplus Morgan enthusiasm and reckless as to the mode of attack. At the shout of the onslaught, Northmore shoved his big form fearlessly upon the mass of struggling arms and legs, seized the bleeding man by the collar, and delivered him into the hands of a marshal to be locked up, a most unsatisfactory ending of the sensation to most of the bystanders. Immediately afterward the programme of the evening opened, though the audience room was murky with the stifling smoke of kerosene torches. Two drunken heelers attempted to climb in at a window with their torches, but were pulled back from the outside without disturbance; they leaned against the wall and swore vengeance upon all entertainments which excluded good Morgan men, for a belief appeared to prevail that Garnett Hall was a part of the celebration. Then, growing weary, they sought a place of rest, though the procession was forming and they were summoned to fall in line. Not wanting to appear in the street, they started to the rear of the Hall, but lost their way, and decided to rest in the unfinished bicycle shed, which had no window. One climbed upon the shoulders of the other into the opening, unlocked the door, and they lay down together upon a soft bed of shavings behind a carpenter's bench, having taken the precaution to lean their torches carefully against the wall of the building.

The star of the concert company was the soprano, who first appeared in the fourth number—the first singer of note who had ever appeared in Mogadonia—and was greeted with hearty applause, for her clear, high voice triumphed over the bedlam outside. It was strained a little as she finished the first stanza, but after the momentary rest of the interlude she began bravely on the second, sang a few notes, and stopped with a gasp for breath. Then the audience knew that the smart of wood smoke had overpowered the rank smell of kerosene, and a startled rustle and murmur ran through the auditorium. Northmore had been keeping guard of the entrance, but sprang to his feet at the first scent that reached him, and walked deliberately down the aisle. Before he reached the stage, however, a wild cry of “Fire! Fire!” smote the boisterous night and lashed the assemblage to panic. Northmore had instantly divined the source of the smoke. He mounted the stage, his commanding voice and presence compelling attention even in the pandemonium that reigned. The singer fled to him for protection; his tones rang easily above the deafening clamour.

“Go out quietly! There’s no danger yet. Keep order! Don’t rush!”

At this there was a halt of attention. People turned their faces to him. He seized the opportunity. “The fire is at this end—behind me. There’s plenty of time. Go out quietly. You’re all safe.”

By this time a long red blade of blaze had sawed its way through the wall back of him, puffing out volumes

of intolerable smoke. But he stood his ground, keeping order by sheer force of personality. When the audience really saw that the fire was coming from the stage end of the building, the dispersal was as orderly as though the concert had closed in the usual way. By the time that the rear half of the large hall was empty, the flames burst jubilantly through the flies behind Northmore and enswathed the beautiful new woodwork in merciless holocaust. The members of the concert company had all gone safely to the front; the crowd was fast passing the danger of panic; the heat was growing more intense each second, and Northmore was lingering but a last breath to keep command, when a richly dressed girl cut through the crowd, rushed back through smothering, stinging smoke, and flung herself upon him, gasping: "Why don't you run? Quick! You will be killed."

He loosened her grip, caught up her silk skirt, winding it about her head, lifted her in his arms, sprang from the platform, for the steps were blazing, and blindly fought his way out through the seats which he could no longer see. He was the last to reach the door—and none too soon! Florida lay limp in his arms, choked with smoke. He pushed his way out through the wild jam of people—the torchlight procession was just returning and added its yelling files to the disaster—and sought a refuge down the street. The first open door was that of the Old Doctor's office. He carried his burden in, put her into a big chair and threw back the light covering from her face. She caught her breath,



"WHY DON'T YOU RUN? QUICK!"—Page 310.

and the tears in her eyes escaped and stole over her cheeks, while she gave him a look that a man does not receive twice in a lifetime—if he ever does at all. It took him a moment to be sure of his voice.

“What a foolish thing to do! I wasn’t in the least danger, you know,” he said in the tender scorn with which a man rebukes a woman’s needless panic at his peril.

She rose to her feet without reply; she was trembling so much that she could scarcely stand. They were very near each other. He lifted his arm deliberately—his eyes making utter surrender to hers—and curved it about her round, young form—mutely, because no words fine and delicate enough have ever been made—or were ever needed.

“Oh, our beautiful Hall!” she wailed a little later when the illumination of the room brought them back to earth again. “Can’t they save any of it at all?” His face saddened.

“No, it was beyond control from the first. And the dense crowd would have made it impossible anyhow.” Then suddenly realising the full tragedy of it, he turned to her with a shy caress:

“My love—oh, my dear love! You don’t know what you have done—in this utter failure of me!”

“Yes, I know, I know better than you can. I see it all—success and failure, and right and wrong—through your eyes now, and I must henceforth live by your ideals, dearest. I could not depend upon my

father's bounty now—though I don't judge him by that standard. We will fight the world together."

Northmore laid his free hand across her lips. "Poor little one! I think that she is preparing to starve——"

"Never! It was you who made that cowardly excuse. I am only answering it in the first chance I have ever had. How mean you were!"

"Poor girl! Wasn't there something better in store for you?"

"How could there be? And it had to be. We both fought it from the start—and failed. I knew it from the very first. The day when you so calmly took possession of me and went to look for the children; I knew I had found my master. But I had a little pride—and when you were so—proud—I went away and stayed all winter. I tried to hate you—because I loved you."

"Dear love! My—wife!—it is still wrong, but I am going to take you from your birthright—little princess. You are *mine!*"

Her soft hands drew down his face for a wordless reply. When her lips were free again she laughed softly, "My only worry is—to know where we shall be married. Don't you suppose Silence will give us standing room at her wedding?"

"If she can't, I know that Mrs. Jernigan will—bless her! And what else matters when we have each other—at last!"

A fresh burst of light blazed luridly into the little room. He drew her into the street, shielding her from

the rabble. A volunteer fire brigade was trying to protect the surrounding buildings from swaying sheets of flame which waved out from the last timbers of Garnett Hall. He led her round by a cross street in the direction of Mrs. Garnett's house. A dense crowd encircled the court house steps, from which someone was speaking so earnestly as to command a hush of attention. It was the Old Doctor. At sight of him Northmore suddenly realised the complete destruction of his work; the annihilation of his dead friend's completed scheme; the negation of all the good that he hoped would emanate from it, and last, the loss of a sum contributed from his own small patrimony which he could not give again. In the first flush of his joy, nothing of this had been real to him. The fire roared and crackled triumphantly at his back—he could not face it.

“Listen, little darling, you don't understand. This is like everything else that I have tried to do—an utter failure! It will follow you, too, and I can't allow that.”

“Hush! Listen!” whispered Florida, clinging to his shoulder.

“—We now see what one day of political corruption has done for our town—and what it has undone! Is that the method of a Christian candidate? Is it the kind of representation we want? Are we going to make a campaign bonfire of the finest institution our town ever had, to win votes for the real owner of Wildwood Park—its opposition?”

“No!” roared a mighty composite voice.

The roof crashed in and a subdued groan from the people interrupted the speaker. When quiet was restored, he went on: "No! We're going to hold this town for law and order—with sober ballots. That's our party platform—honour and decency. We're never going to have such scenes on our streets again as have disgraced to-day. And—one thing more!—we're *going to build that hall again!* We can't do without it—after having it this one day."

"Hurrah! Hurrah for the Old Doctor!" endorsed the crowd.

"Just as quick as that foundation gets cool enough we're going to put up that building again—and we're going to raise the money among ourselves. I wasn't in it the other time—but I'm going to get in this time—on the ground floor. I'll start the stock this minute with two thousand dollars. I believe the other building cost twenty-five."

"I'll give a thousand," added Mr. Moneypenny, shouldering his way through. "I opposed it before—but I have reason to want it now."

"There's fifteen thousand insurance on it," announced Mr. Harrington from the top step.

A man who had been struggling through to the Old Doctor, now spoke to him in a low tone, the doctor leaning down to listen. When he had repeated the message, to make sure, the Old Doctor lifted his hand for attention:

"I am requested to announce that Mr. Morgan deeply regrets that this accident should have occurred

on the night of the torchlight procession, as he fears that some spark set loose in the exceedingly dry weather may have been the cause, and on account of this, he offers to rebuild the Hall entirely at his own expense. What shall we do with this offer? What shall we do with our own intentions?"

It was the propitious moment; enthusiasm was at its highest point.

"No!" shouted one voice with no uncertain ring. "No!" followed a few scattering votes.

"No!" called a woman's rich, throaty tone. "It's a bid for votes on 'lection day, and this town don't sell itself at that price. We'll build that hall agin independent, with Mr. Northmore at the head of it."

"Three cheers for Mis' Jernigan!" proposed a youthful tenor, and they rang out with a will.

"Northmore! Northmore! Where's Northmore?" shouted many voices. But Northmore could not be found. He had grown suddenly faint, and was sitting in the shadow on the steps of the National Bank, his head in his hands, and Florida beside him, her delicate rich gown trailing in the gritty dust.

"Oh, no, don't call it failure!" she was saying. "Can't you see what you have achieved? Can't you see what a reactive tornado it has produced—your work—this rousing of the public conscience—the rising above the jingling of the guinea and holding their votes as a sacred right? Nothing else could have done it so surely. Think what it means—in this age—to refuse a great gift for their own self-respect—lest it should

be a bribe. *Think of it!* It is tremendous—and *you have achieved it*—my hero, my king!”

He turned quickly and drew her close in the hollow of a possessing arm: “If all else has failed—if all my life has been bootlessly spent—it is well lost—for it has brought you to me—my Love—my Love!”

CHAPTER XXIV

THE light sheathing of Garnett Hall was swiftly eaten up by the ferocity of the fire, but its staunch new beams resisted destruction until daylight, when the last glowing brands sank into ashes. Their blaze made a rendezvous during the night hours for those delegates whose enthusiasm had outlasted the Grand Rally to the extent that they could not remember where they lived—or had lost all desire to go there. These ranged themselves around the blazing heap in such attitudes as they were still able to maintain, with that delight in a conflagration which is one of the survivals of primitive savagery to which man in the mass reverts. Their enjoyment merged, with the waning glow, into an aftermath of righteous indignation at the irrevocable destruction. This smothered righteousness now rose mightily, puffing itself into noble proportions and clawing with octopus arms for a meaty victim. The visible object was the man in the limelight, the man to whom this critical assemblage owed a grudge—for had they not partaken of his hospitality that day? And when is an unpaid obligation not an injury to be resented? The barbecue had been eaten, the chemical whisky dried at the fount, while human rectitude in the matter of other men's sins grows sharp at three o'clock of the morning after. The clammy feelers of

public judgment lighted upon Tom Morgan, slid critically over him, found him edible, and sent an arm or two out to draw him into closer embrace.

"Morgan's went too fur," rolled out the first feeler in difficult articulation to a neighbour who hugged his knees before the fire. "He hadn't orto of burned down fine prope'ty that-a-way."

"Morgan never done it," gurgled the companion feebly.

"Morgan done it all right, all right! I never said he put no match to it with his own hands—but you take notice to him an' Northmore. They ain't whoopin' fur one 'nother."

"You're right thar," observed a barroom sage of hoary whiskers. "Hit mought of ben 'naccident—but hit was the oncommonest handiest accident ever I seen."

"It's killed Northmore, all right," observed a racketty voice farther away, "killed him deader'n a hammer. Too bad fur Northmore, too. He ain't a bad feller—considerin' he used ter preach. Heard him make er speech. He can't help it he's on t'other side. Had to be 'nother side—Morgan wouldn't have nobody to beat. Morgan's got to beat somebody, I reckon. How c'n Northmore help that? Morgan's got everything—'lection—'n' money—all the money 'n the worl'—'n' office—'n'—money—'n'—money—'n'—everything. Northmore's pore man—pore man's friend, too. Damn shame to burn down Northmore's show—'n' all his wives—'n' chillern—everything. Morgan's durned

hog—that's what Morgan is!" bellowed a reclining figure in a warm place.

"Ah'm goin' to vote f'r Northmore!" croaked a ragged throat. "Rar f'r Northmore!" But there was not enough breath in the party to vocalise the cheer.

"Ought to 'courage pore man's friend," resumed the man of an idea. "Let's vote f'r Northmore. What's he runnin' fur?"

"Same thing's Morgan, 'course. Yah! 'Courage pore man—pore man's—pore man's—burnt up—show——" and the speaker went to sleep upon this virtuous resolve.

The last drops of Fury's whisky were drained from short-necked bottles, and husky opinions about nothing in particular were endorsed with a grunt of applause.

"Morgan's damn c'ruption can'date! Don't vote my vote f'r rotgut whisky 'n' bum terbacker. Morgan's cheap! Only give us two hunnerd dollars 'n' uniforms f'r our whole township! 'M goin' vote f'r hones' man!"

This was such convincing logic that the politicians mostly went to sleep upon it.

The dull purple of dawn found a corona of lusty patriots radiating from the warm ashes of Garnett Hall. The first man to waken sat up, extricated his head from the ruins of his campaign hat, and continued his argument, unconscious that there had been a hiatus of some hours. "—Yah! Damfool trick of Morgan to give himself away—offering to build 'nozzar

house f'r one he burned. Northmore's good feller, too. Never spent a c'ruption dollar!"

The blurred autumn day streamed in a red glare over the hump of Saddleback upon the sleepy town, in lingering dust and smoke and thick *débris* of its most exciting day. It was the dawn of a reactive day when overspent enthusiasm sought grumbling in its ashes for what it had lost.

Joe Fury drove out to Heathermuir earlier than he was even wont to rise, to offer a congratulatory hand to his chief. The Grand Rally, masterstroke of the campaign, well planned and lavishly executed, had so far exceeded expectations in the hosts of retainers it had swept in from remote hill fastnesses that its banners spelled nothing less than overwhelming success. But, sweeter than success to Tom Morgan was the annihilation of Northmore, the only man who had ever dared openly to oppose his dictates, to humble his supremacy, to wound his inordinate self-love.

The triumph of victory was gilded by the downfall of his foe.

The two winners shook hands long in rejoicing without need of words.

"I tell you it's going to be a landslide! Thompson Jones has bought a ticket to South America—to raise peanuts. Nothin' in this district ever like it before."

"It was a great idea. And I give you credit for carrying out my idea well, very well, indeed."

"Thank you, Mr. Morgan—the Honourable Mr. Morgan! I do think it was well done—never lost sight

of a thing—never went wrong once—well, I don't know, either, but it went a little farther than we meant it to, the enthusiasm—but I guess that was all to the good. Sort of opposition scheme, anyway, that holy theatre. I always opposed it, from the first."

"So did I, Joe, and I notice that what I don't approve of in this county doesn't generally prosper."

"I should say not!"

It is only a supreme master of the great games of war and politics who can calculate to a nicety the force of rebound. And both Morgan and Fury were mere caddies in training. Hence they could not calculate the reflex force of each day they had mistakenly lost by changing to the earlier date of the Garnett Hall opening. And seven days can measure an epoch—when begun by a conflagration.

Northmore also had risen early on the morning after the eventful night, had risen eagerly after hours of almost delirious wakefulness, and hurried to his office, impatient to begin anew the building of the Hall and all that it stood for, regarding the apparent failure of his political championship with a degree of satisfaction, since, having done his utmost to defeat the candidate, Morgan, he could acquiesce in the victory of the man, Morgan, who was Florida's father, for her sake. During the unreal visions of the night he half believed that the sacred hour in which he had held Florida Morgan for a moment to his heart, his promised wife, in which he had heard words of love from her lips that started out in electric fire as he read them in memory again and

again, was an illuminated phantasy, a part of the lurid dream of the destruction of the Hall with which it was mingled. He went around behind the spur to avoid seeing the ruins and knowing their evidence.

Among other things it flashed upon him in the night that, while he had in no way neglected his work at the factory, he had been faithful only in the capacity of a paid agent. He had not put his individuality into it, nor developed it in any of the many ways that his progressive temperament might have suggested and the prosperity of the past year made possible. He had been deterred from this by his desire to carry out Mr. Garnett's method along its original lines as far as possible and by the dread of Mrs. Garnett's instinctive conservatism. Several improvements might be made—ought to be made, in fact, for this was a case in which there was no middle ground. He must go forward or backward.

There had come to him soon after his return in the spring the wreck of a man sodden with drink who claimed to be an expert in a certain line and who wanted a chance to work and to reconstruct himself. This chance Northmore had given with a good deal of personal interest and had watched him expand into decency and steadiness of conduct. The man, an Englishman, had been crowded from his notice by the clamouring activities of the past few weeks, and Northmore now made it his first duty to look him up and see how he was holding out. He found him there early, confused and reticent at Northmore's cordial questioning about him—

self. But he was doing his work well, exceptionally well, and with a skill that gave it distinction.

"I think I'm going to have a talk with you, Mullins,—about experimenting a little, with a view to adding a specialty or two to our output later on."

Mullins's face lighted at the intimation.

"That's good news, sir. It's what I was 'oping, sir, that we could do a bit better in the hornamental line. I've ben tryin' my 'and out of hours and I think I've struck a glaze that's a himprovement over anything round 'ere, sir. If I 'ave, Mr. Northmore, we can make a good thing hof it."

"Go ahead and experiment as much as you like. We want to make our ware better and better—and add some new departments, don't we?"

"You're right, sir, we do!" Mullins' polished face glowed a shade brighter and he turned to his task with new inspiration.

That afternoon Northmore had a long talk with Mrs. Garnett and Silence, showing them through the various departments and explaining how easy it would be to enlarge the capacity of the pottery and how desirable it would be to improve the quality of the ware by the addition of a specialty. To this both agreed, and he promised to have a definite proposition to place before them within a week. This, with an occasional stolen glimpse of Florida at Mrs. Garnett's, made the week a swift one, bringing election day on apace. He made the closing speech for Thompson Jones on the preceding evening at Mosely's, a hamlet a few miles away, and

went to cast his vote early the next morning with a sense of relief that the long strain was over.

As he entered the pottery Mullins met him with a triumphant air that covered no common day's work.

"Good-mornin', Mr. Northmore. I 'ope you find yourself well this fine day?—That's good, sir. If you'd take the trouble to step in here, sir, I'd like you to see a piece or two that's just come out of the kiln—a bit that I've been doin' of—and they ain't bad, sir, I think. At least, that's my opinion."

It had taken the education of the past six months to make Northmore appreciate the slender vase that the other man handed to him with a loving caress. He took it and turned it carefully in his hand, holding it to the light, then watching its brilliance in shade. Mullins waited, breathing heavily.

"Did you do this?" was the first inane question.

"I did, sir."

"Can you do it again?"

"Every time, sir,—that is, barrin'——"

"Of course. I mean—it wasn't chance?"

"Not a bit of it, Mr. Northmore. I've done almost the same in my old place, and I allus felt sure that if I had the liberty to go a bit my own way, I could do this. Ain't she a beauty, though?"

"It is exquisite. I shall take this to Mrs. Garnett at once, and to—another lady who knows a great deal about fine ware. We'll not stop on this, I can assure you."

Mullins returned to his bench with an eager lurch, and

Northmore went to his desk to hurry through his own work. It was noon before he could get away to see Mrs. Garnett and Silence. They were delighted with the specimen, which he hardly gave them time to examine, so impatient he was to exhibit it to Florida.

He drove out over the smooth road to Heathermuir, lending himself to the day, one of those rare tournaments of the hills when they appear to march in majestic procession as billows of glimmering mist and waves of golden light and purple shadow play upon them with an effect of solemn motion. It was apparent that there was intense interest in the election from the groups of earnest men who everywhere were tending to the voting places.

"I guess Morgan's making a clean sweep," remarked more than one man who stopped him to ask for a prediction of that most uncertain futurity—the result of an election.

"I suppose so," he would answer, in haste to go on. He was lifted into an upper ether of happiness by the growing reality of Florida's love and frightened a little at the requirements of such a woman's standard of manhood, beside which considerations all other human affairs grew trivial.

With this keenly in mind, something like dread rose within him at the glow of love and pride and utter faith in the eyes that met him. Would he be strong and noble enough to keep that look in his wife's eyes through all the years of their dual life? But the touch of her confident hand, the impact of her personality, the

warmth of her sweet mouth thrilled him with resolve and taught him that though she had exalted ideals, she would help him to attain them.

They went up to the summer house where they had spent the first hours of their acquaintance together, and she made tea for him in the perfect afternoon whose hours slipped by like pearls on a golden strand. It had been but a year since their first talk in that spot, a year into whose little span an age of living had been crowded. It was the first opportunity they had had for a quiet conference regarding the arrangements for their marriage. There was a glamour of rose tint in the shy confidences they exchanged. Florida tried to estimate how many gowns a year she actually needed, and Northmore told her how much he could earn, twice as much, she said, as she had expected.

"You are not to sacrifice your comfort, you know. It may mean a little waiting, but not very long," he said with a smile.

For the look she gave him in reply he could have worshipped her: "There is no question of that now. And you may have to take me very suddenly—if—if father is defeated. I can't think of such a possibility—I have no idea what he will do—but it will be something terrible. It will be the blow of his life—he has never been crossed before—and he will hold you accountable. I don't know what he will do."

"There's no danger of that, Florida. Your father has the whole district. All the foreign miners and mill hands have been naturalised and will be voted in pla-

toons. His election has been conceded ever since the barbecue."

He had forgotten the vase until now. She watched him unfold its delicate wrappings, and gave a cry of pleasure when it was revealed. She took it up and turned it to the light, seeing qualities that he had not known—and he had been studying pottery for months.

"What a lot of opportunity that suggests—for the pottery and for Mogadonia and for us. If you can produce one thing like this, you can make a reputation for your ware. What do you call it?"

"It is practically new—unique. There's a suggestion of some of the English makes—but it is new. Name it, dearest."

"Shall I? It makes me think of the aurora lights I saw last winter—a thin green flame, edged with rose, with stars gleaming through, upon a background of royal blue sky. Not that these are the colours, but they have that mysterious translucency. Do you want to call it that—Aurora?"

"So be it christened."

"And what are you going to do with it?"

"Make it a department now, and experiment and improve. Then we shall see what else can be done. I don't know just how to develop the idea—and the man—but a test will try that. What would you advise?"

"To go abroad and study the old-world potteries—and ceramics—as closely as possible. One learns so much from the actual places and the marvellous displays that are not trade secrets at all. Can you manage it?"

"If you will go with me. Yes, I can manage that, for it is my business now. That will make it worth while and give me a grip on something permanent—if you are willing that it should be so."

She leaned forward and laid her hand upon his, looking into his eyes again, her own luminous with purposeful love: "I shall love it. We will go together and study and improve and import until we make the finest and loveliest ware in the country. And we will carry on Mr. Garnett's purpose with the people and the village—oh, it will be splendid to have an object to attain."

He bent to kiss her for answer, finding words quite inadequate for the things he wanted to tell her.

Tom Morgan had forgotten that he had a daughter that afternoon. He had been making a circuit of the district in his big red touring car and drove through the hilly streets of Mogadonia just about this time most ostentatiously, believing that proof of wealth was proof of greatness. For touring cars were not a common sight among the hills—and he imagined that the display would inspire votes for him. He met a delegation of quarry hands headed by Quiggins on their way to the polls. Quiggins took off his hat with a significant smile that pleased the candidate immensely and made him wonder why he had not thought of Quiggins as a campaign worker. He was an intelligent fellow, an exceptionally good talker, and had boundless influence with his companions. But then, it would have been superfluous.

Florida went as far as the great iron gates with her lover, and walked back under the brown trees of the avenue, while Northmore turned his horses' heads toward the town and dropped the reins, letting them take their own gait while he reviewed the enchanted hours just past. He had quite forgotten that it was election day until he entered the town and noted the unusual stir on the streets. He was surprised at the number who knew him, called him by name, and pointed him out to their wives. Rumours of the result were already afloat, but he went to his room to do a little unfinished work and look over his mail.

There had been so much "scratching" that the count was slow. He went back after dinner to finish before authentic returns were in, but had scarcely seated himself at his table before the air was attacked by tin horns and campaign yells, unerring forerunners of the tide of returns. He listened for the name of the winner. "*What's the matter —? He's all right!*" yelled the crowd. He could not catch the name, though it surely had two syllables. That must be Morgan—of course. Still he opened the window to make sure. "*What's the matter with —? He's all right!*"

He caught up his hat to go out, but at the head of the stairs he met two men who were coming up; the foremost was Quiggins.

"Hello, Mr. Northmore, we've come to congratulate you," he said, taking off his hat and extending an awkward hand.

"Ah, have we got it? Has Jones won?"

"*Jones!* Thunder! No, it ain't Jones we're whoopin' up—it's *you?*"

Northmore stared at the man in annoyance: "What do you mean?" he asked.

"It's no joke, Mr. Northmore. I don't know what the returns from other towns are—not many are in yet, but Mogadonia's voting for you like mad."

"For me! Why, I'm not on the ticket. It's impossible."

"Can't help it, Mr. Northmore, if Mogadonia was the whole district, you'd be congressman yourself. I started a little boom for you out at the quarry 'bout three weeks ago. I thought you deserved it more than either of the others, and it would put you in line for the next time. Just wait two years, Mr. Northmore, and it'll be your name at the top of the ticket in good earnest."

Northmore still stared stupidly at the man: "Do you mean to say that some voters have actually written my name on their tickets?"

"Yes, hundreds of 'em. I did myself, and they do say—it's the biggest joke of all—that some of the imported Morgan heelers started a boom for you the night of the fire. I believe some of 'em actually voted that way, too, for they were down on Tom not opening his barrel wider. They were drunk on his whisky! Ain't that rich?"

"How's Jones running?"

"Fine—and Morgan falling behind."

"Ah! Then that—mistake hasn't cut Jones?"

"It's no mistake, Mr. Northmore, but it's helped Jones. Some of us wanted you so bad—it seemed such a shame that you weren't the man—that we thought we'd vote for you anyhow. If the people want a man, and he's the man for the place—why, it can't be wrong to try to put him there—and, by thunder!—it looked for one while as if you'd get it."

"I'm glad it didn't hurt Jones," breathed Northmore in profound relief.

The din in the streets silenced further talk, but Northmore's name was in every blast, having attracted more attention from its sensational use than the legitimate candidates who received the bulk of the vote.

As soon after midnight as he could get a wire Northmore telegraphed to Jones: "Congratulations. You are elected in spite of blunder over my name," and at daylight the answer came: "Thank you, it was what saved me, can't let a man like you do private business, will you take appointment?"

Northmore put this into his pocket with a smile, and went to his office to look over the morning mail that he might go to Mrs. Garnett's during the forenoon, for consultation.

He found Florida in the living room there, a little later, her eyes pink with tears; a curious flutter of mingled pride and grief in her voice. She had fled to these steadfast friends in the hour of her father's humiliation and her lover's vindication. She answered the inquiry of Northmore's eyes.

"Father left on the early train—for a long jour-

ney. He says he is going round the world—but—do you know—I think he will come back different. He came into my room this morning before it was light to bid me good-bye, and there was something so changed in his manner. He asked, ‘How did it happen, dearie?’ and I told him it was because people thought he hadn’t been fair to Ellis—and some of the other men. And he looked so sad and walked away. A minute after he came back, his overcoat on, and said, ‘I’m afraid it’s forever too late. Ellis is dead.’ And there wasn’t anything for me to say. I hope he will never know—how bad it was for Ellis.”

“I hope not!” echoed Northmore heartily, recalling that death scene.

Mrs. Garnett and Silence came in just then and were full of interest in the election. While they were talking over the strange freak of the voters in Northmore’s behalf, a boy brought a collection of telegrams for Northmore which he handed to Florida as he read them. One was from the junior senator from the State—of the opposite party—and read, “Will Mr. Northmore accept consulship to Mexico,” another from an old friend of Northmore’s father, a prominent manufacturer, said, “Am looking for superintendent, come to Cincinnati before signing elsewhere”; two or three were offers of smaller opportunities, political and otherwise, and congratulations and comments upon the singular compliment he had received.

“But what of us if you accept any of these things?” asked Mrs. Garnett anxiously.

"So much is opening up in the business," pleaded Silence, "and no one else can ever carry out father's life work."

Northmore looked at Florida in mute questioning. Mrs. Garnett opened her lips to speak, but waited his decision.

"Let us go for a gallop and talk it over, Florida," he said. "I saw that you were riding this morning."

When they were well out of town, climbing the steep road up Old Whiteface, she checked her horse for a rest and turned to him seriously.

"Where can you live most truly? What will give you most individually?"

"To stay here—right where I am. It has been a dream of mine to consecrate my life in business activity. I know that it can be done—it has been done in innumerable quiet instances. I don't want a political life—and my professional one has been a failure. But you?"

"I should love it. You know that."

"Then we will go back and tell Mrs. Garnett."

"Yes." She rode out on the little plateau where they had stopped and looked down upon the pottery and its cluster of pretty homes and green lawns.

"In the only sermon I ever heard you preach you said that not every man knew whether his altar was builded to God or to Mammon. Here we shall build our altar—to God—for our people."

"Amen," he said softly, laying his hand upon the gauntleted one that rested on the horn of her saddle.

When they announced their decision, Mrs. Garnett

uttered the speech that had stopped upon her lips before they had gone away: "Then, Mr. Northmore, you may take entire charge and I will be a silent partner—an equal partner—yes, that is no more than fair. And we will make the business a noble monument to the man who planned it—and made it possible."

"We can do it," answered Northmore, seeking Florida's eyes.

On a sparkling morning in the beginning of the New Year the eastbound express took on a young couple of such distinction of appearance that the passengers of the Pullman car paid them the tribute of a hearty stare. A few people had come to see them off, to whom they opened a window to say a last good-bye before their long journey, then, as the train moved out, they bent to look down at the housetops of the queer, beloved town below. The train plunged into the tunnel; when it emerged there was a fleeting glimpse of a grey turreted house against the white blanket of Blue Mountain. The young man grasped his wife's hand as it lay on the sill, "We are not looking backward, darling, are we?"

For the look in the deeps of her eyes he could have lost all else: "Only to measure all that is before us," she said.

THE END

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